

GIPSY HAWKINS



Shoeblack
Cobbler Boy-Preacher
Evangelist & Soulwinner

• ANGUS McMILLAN •

GIPSY JOHN HAWKINS

A vivid sketch of one of the oldest and best loved evangelists of the day.

Gipsy Hawkins began life in humble circumstances, and triumphing over all handicaps, he has become, by the grace of God, a preacher whose message has been used in the salvation of hundreds of souls throughout Great Britain and U.S.A.

His travels and experiences here recorded make a stimulating story which captures the imagination, holds the reader's attention throughout and shows how wonderfully God can use a fully consecrated life.

Mr. Cowan

The Knave

Elgin.

Pastor Hawkins preached in Van
Baptist Church on 26th July 1942
and I was privileged to hear him

GIPSY HAWKINS



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GIPSY
JOHN
HAWKINS



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Shoeblack—Cobbler—"Boy Preacher"

Evangelist and Soulwinner

By

REV. ANGUS McMILLAN, M.A.

(Leith Baptist Church, Edinburgh)

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PREFACE

GIPSY JOHN HAWKINS is one of the oldest and best-loved evangelists at work to-day in the Gospel field. His name is a "household word" in many parts of America, as in the cities and towns of the homeland. Audiences have filled the largest halls and churches in all parts of the world to hear, from the Gipsy's own lips, the thrilling story of his early life and conversion. This has been a notable feature in his evangelistic campaigns during the last forty years, and only eternity will reveal the results which have followed the simple recital of his life story.

In many ways Gipsy John Hawkins has had a unique career. His life is a modern epic of the grace of God. No one could have had a humbler beginning. Few have exercised a wider influence in life. Thousands in every part of the world have been won for Christ or led into a richer experience of the Christian life through his God-honoured ministry. His career is a literal fulfilment of such texts as, "Them

that honour Me I will honour ” and “ Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.” Nothing could be more stimulating or soul-enriching than a study of this remarkable life. It exemplifies the well-known adage, “ Truth is stranger than fiction.” Here is a story abounding in dramatic episodes and thrilling adventures, which cannot fail to arrest the attention of the reader.

The author’s purpose has been, not merely to chronicle an interesting and unusual career, but to emphasize the power of the Gospel in human lives. Changed lives are the finest “ Christian Evidences,” and wherever Gipsy Hawkins has laboured lives have been changed. He has been privileged to see many amazing cases of conversion, some of which find a place in these pages. Preachers will find many telling and up-to-date illustrations throughout the book.

This book has been written amid the multitudinous duties involved in a busy city pastorate. It has been penned for the glory of God and the good of men. It is sent forth with the earnest prayer that it may be a blessing to many and a source of inspiration, especially to young people.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

“TICKET for London, please ! ”

A small, ragged urchin of ten or eleven years peered into the face of a booking-clerk at Richmond railway station just outside the great city.

“What part of London ? ” enquired the booking-clerk.

The idea that London had “parts ” was new to John but, eventually, he got a ticket for Waterloo station and in due course arrived at the busy terminus desperately hungry. Quickly he found a cheap eating-house and expended fourpence of his meagre capital on a scanty meal.

John’s father was a rough-and-ready gipsy, addicted to strong drink and he had left the caravan to call at a nearby public-house. Young John was in charge of a spare horse at the rear of the van and, in his father’s absence he had untied the horse, intending to take it for a drink.

Alas, the animal broke from his grasp and, taking advantage of its freedom, careered down the road.

The irate father, hearing the clatter of the horse's hoofs, took in the situation at a glance and hurriedly left his drinking. He rushed into the street with curses and threatenings and felled his little son. As he set off after the runaway horse he shouted at the little lad, "You wait till I come back: I'll break your neck."

Terrified by these words, John took to his heels in the opposite direction as fast as his legs would carry him. He had the morning's takings in his pocket—the sum of about two shillings, and he made headlong for the nearest railway station, that the train might carry him away from the dreaded thrashing which he knew his father would inflict when he returned.

From that day to this John Hawkins has never seen nor heard of his parents. This is the great tragedy of his life and he can never speak of it without emotion.

Gipsy Hawkins was born in a gipsy tent or caravan about the year 1872, some sixty-seven years ago. He has no birth certificate, so the

exact date and place are unknown. As he is fond of saying, "Although I was there at the time I cannot remember the details exactly!" From odd scraps of remembered conversations between his father and mother he thinks that he must have seen the light of day somewhere in Peeblesshire in Scotland; he has thus some small claim to being a Scotsman.

The first ten or eleven years of his life were spent in the open air, trekking from place to place with his parents in the usual gipsy fashion. He lived the normal life of a gipsy boy, selling pegs and other small articles from door to door. This nomadic life prevented him from attending school and he received no regular education. It is remarkable, in view of his later usefulness, that John Hawkins never spent a single day in an ordinary school. That he managed to overcome this great handicap and to become, in later years, a forceful, eloquent and grammatical speaker is a remarkable tribute to the grace of God as well as to his own diligence.

The open-air life engendered in young Hawkins a love for the countryside and an appreciation of its beauties which persist to

this day. As with many other country-bred lads the sights and sounds of nature played a real part in his education and coloured his ministry.

In those days hundreds of gipsy caravans made their way each year to such large cities as London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow to replenish their stocks at wholesale warehouses. The Hawkins' family were on their way to London for this purpose and the caravan was drawn up outside a public-house at the top of Richmond Hill when the incident recorded earlier in this chapter took place.

When John came out of the eating-house after his first meal in London, he was assailed by a feeling of unutterable loneliness which chilled his very heart. Picture the situation!—a boy barely eleven years of age, quite friendless in the heart of the biggest city in the world. There were thousands of passers-by but, in all the crowd, no smiling look of recognition and no outstretched hand of friendship. The boy knew quite well that by his own effort he must earn his livelihood or die of starvation. Gipsies are merchants by instinct and John soon got work to do. Outside Waterloo station a number

of boys were selling evening papers. John lost no time in learning the *modus operandi* of the business and within three hours of his entering London he had started business as a "news-agent" on his own account, with the magnificent capital of one shilling! The irony of the situation was that he could not read the words on the placards. However, the other boys read the newsbills for him, and for three long months he contrived to live on the meagre profits derived from the sale of newspapers. Ever since he has had a warm heart for newsboys.

When his papers sold well he had a good feed, a visit to the "Penny Gaff," a cheap place of entertainment, and a bed in the lodging-house. But many a time, when his papers did not go well, he had to go hungry and spend the night in an empty cart or on the seats on the Thames Embankment. The Gipsy looks back on these three months as the most trying in his long career. At that time he made two great resolutions—never to touch strong drink and never to steal. To-day Gipsy Hawkins is justifiably proud that, by the help of God, he has been enabled to keep those early vows. They were remarkable in one so young, and in

one completely untouched as yet by Christian influences.

In after years the Gipsy used every means in his power to trace the father and mother he had lost so tragically, but without success. Not the faintest clue to their circumstances or their whereabouts did he ever discover. This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that for the last forty years he has been telling his life story all over the world to crowded audiences. At one meeting in St. Mary's, New Ontario, Canada, some gipsies were present and heard the Gipsy's life-story. One of them waited behind and told him that he thought he had met his parents. Some twenty-five years before, this gipsy had met a couple of gipsies from Britain and recollected that the wife used to weep for her lost boy. These details seemed to fit in with Hawkins' experience as a child. It turned out, however, that these gipsies had moved on and, as twenty-five years had elapsed since this chance meeting, nothing further could be discovered.

During his three months on the London streets John missed his parents keenly. Sometimes the loneliness was so overwhelming that he would go away to a nook or corner in the

stone recesses of Waterloo Bridge with a bundle of unsold newspapers under his arm, turn his face to the wall and sob as if his heart would break. Then and later he would have given all his worldly possessions for just one glimpse of his lost gipsy mother. He has the happiest recollections of her love and kindness. After his conversion he never let a day pass without definite prayer for the salvation of his parents.

At this time John Hawkins found a chum named Charlie, another waif of the London streets. He was younger than John, but was able to read. Dire need drew them together. They sold their newspapers together, ate together and slept together. One day as they were crossing Westminster Bridge they met a shoeblack, resplendent in a fine uniform, with corduroy trousers, red tunic and red peaked hat. They were duly impressed, and said, "'Allo mate, where do *you* come from?" The boy answered in a haughty and disdainful manner, "I come from the South London Refuge and Shoeblack Brigade Society." After a bit of coaxing, they learned from him the whereabouts of this institution and decided to seek admission. Eventually they arrived at the place, 65 High

Street, Clapham, S.W., and the building looked like a palace to the homeless lads. They timidly rang the bell and were received sympathetically by Mr. T. Jones, honorary secretary of the Society. Having heard their story, he handed them over to Mr. and Mrs. Gray, the Master and Matron of the Refuge. This was the beginning of a new era in their lives.

“South London Refuge and Shoeblack Brigade Society,” later called after its founder, the “Carter Home for Destitute Boys,” had been started by William Carter, the well-known evangelist, in 1870. William Carter was an outstanding figure in the religious life of the metropolis for many years. He held extraordinary tea meetings for people of all types—thieves, navvies, costermongers, roughs and fallen women—at which the Gospel was preached with amazing success. He also founded night refuges and soup kitchens for outcasts. It was in the Carter Home that John Hawkins first came under Christian influences and yielded his heart to Christ. It is singularly fitting that one who was afterwards to become such a noted evangelist should be reared in a home founded by an evangelist.

Life in the Carter Home was well regulated. The boys went to bed early and were up early. The food was plain but substantial. Cleanliness was insisted upon. Each boy was supplied with a uniform, shoeblack box, brushes and other equipment, and given a certain stance. He cleaned the shoes of the passers-by for a copper or two and was required to hand in a proportion of his takings each day. A wise discipline was exercised over the lads and regular Gospel services were held in the Home. There were about one hundred and sixty boys in the Refuge; and for twelve months young Hawkins went shoe-blackening on the streets of London. Some of the boys frittered away their time playing pitch and toss, but Johnnie and Charlie did their work well and thus gained the goodwill of the officials in the Home. Mrs. Gray, the matron, was specially attracted by the little gipsy boy and took him to her heart right away. She became a real mother to him, and in later years John Hawkins grew to love her as fondly as ever a boy loved his mother. As far as it was humanly possible she took the place of the gipsy mother he had lost so tragically. A year after Hawkins had entered the Home the Society

decided to teach the older boys a trade and John Hawkins was put to shoemaking. He served a five years' apprenticeship and then worked for other three years as a journeyman shoemaker.

CHAPTER II

CONVERSION

We come now to the most important event in Gipsy Hawkins' life, his conversion. If the date, place and circumstances of his physical birth are obscure this cannot be said of his "second birth." After more than fifty years the details of the latter are still fresh and vivid in his mind. He has told the story of it to tens of thousands in many lands and, as a result, hundreds have been led to Christ. His conversion experience had, for himself and others, far-reaching consequences quite undreamt-of at the time. It was the beginning of spiritual life for him. There is romance about beginnings. If the oak tree exists potentially in the acorn then the evangelistic career of Gipsy Hawkins may be regarded as implicit in his conversion.

In the Carter Home prayers were taken in turn by the various officials and these services were often made the occasion for earnest Gospel

messages. The speakers had a good hearing as the boys were strictly supervised and any irreverence or inattention was punished. For eighteen months John Hawkins attended these services without being influenced very much. One day the service was taken by the master shoemaker, Mr. Lawler, who had a real passion for souls and always gave a very earnest Gospel address. His text gripped young Hawkins right away and riveted his attention. It was, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." A solemn hush fell upon the audience as the speaker described the rich farmer who lived without God. Towards the close of his address the preacher fastened his eyes upon John Hawkins and, pointing his finger at the lad, he said, "If God called you to-night where would you spend eternity?" These words and the pointing finger went to John's heart like a sword-thrust, and he saw himself as vile, unclean and utterly unprepared to meet God. Though deeply convicted he lacked the courage to speak to the preacher just then. After the meeting the devil whispered to him, "Just slip off to bed; you'll soon lose these impressions." John went to bed but could not sleep. The text haunted him and he was afraid to go to sleep as

he was, unconverted, lest he should wake in hell.

The lights were out in the dormitory but John got up and partially dressed. He made his way quietly along the corridors to Mr. Lawler's private room. A light showed in the window and John tapped on the door. A gruff voice answered from within, "Who's there?" for it was against the rules to disturb any master at night except the one on duty. Mr. Lawler opened the door and John burst into tears, saying, "Oh! sir, I'm such a big sinner that I cannot go to sleep." In a moment the master's arms were round the boy and he made him sit down by the fire. He lifted his open Bible and read several texts including John v., verse 24, "He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Finally he turned up Acts ii., verse 21, "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then light came to the boy's soul. They knelt down together and for the first time in his life John prayed to God. Immediately the burden of sin was lifted and a great peace flooded his heart. Before John went back

to bed the master gave him some invaluable advice which has helped to shape all his after-life. "Now Johnny," he said, "take a bold stand for Jesus Christ; nail your colours to the mast and refuse to haul them down." Then he gave the boy a motto text, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." (Luke xii., verses 8-9.) Finally Mr. Lawler gave the young convert some tender words of encouragement. He said, "My dear boy, your lot in life is a sad one. You have no friends or relatives to help you. Every other boy in the Home has some one to appeal to in the hour of need. You have no one." This was perfectly true. Relatives and friends of the other boys used to come and take them out for a day and give them a good time; they would come back with their pockets full. No one ever came for John Hawkins; it seemed as if nobody wanted him. The master went on, "But remember, Johnny, God will take care of you. If you look after God's interests God lives to look after yours."

A few words regarding the man who had the privilege of leading John Hawkins to Christ will not come amiss. Mr. Lawler was an "old boy" of Fegan's Homes. Like the Gipsy he had been a waif on the streets of London but he had been rescued and brought up by Mr. J. W. C. Fegan in his home for boys. He was taught shoemaking and later had become the master shoemaker in the Carter Home where John came into contact with him. He had a fine voice and was an earnest preacher and soul-winner. Some time after leading the young gipsy to Christ he left the Carter Home to take up work in another institution of the same kind. But for this humble servant of Jesus Christ Gipsy Hawkins might never have been led to decide for Christ, nor have started on his career of widespread service for God.

Young Hawkins got through the next day all right but after prayers that evening an awful struggle began in his heart. The enemy of souls said to him, "If you kneel down in that dormitory to say your prayers, all the boys will see you and you will have a rough time of it. You had better slip into bed with the rest and when the lights are out you say your prayers quietly

between the sheets." However, young as he was, John got the victory over the subtle tempter. He reasoned thus, "If I try to hide my prayers I am being ashamed of Jesus." He watched the other boys getting into bed, one by one, and when he got a favourable opportunity he knelt down to pray. His chums were amazed, for John had been the ringleader in their fun and mischief up till then. Several pillows were thrown in his direction but, as he is fond of saying now, "Pillows never hurt anyone." He had taken his stand for Christ and the very joy of heaven filled his soul that night. In the days that followed he endured much persecution. The other boys tried to make his life a misery. They snubbed him and jeered at him saying, whenever he appeared, "Here he comes, sanctimonious Johnny!" He not only bore up under it but gave vent to his feelings in hymns and choruses such as :

"Let us never mind the scoffs nor the jeers of
the world,
For we all have a cross to bear;
It will only make the crown the brighter to
shine,
When we have that crown to wear."

Looking back upon this experience the Gipsy is convinced that persecution is a wholesome thing for the child of God. The reason why some Christians are not persecuted is that they are not witnessing for God as they ought. They live, talk, think and act like worldlings. In some parts of the United States of America business men are very considerate to ministers of the Gospel and charge them only half-price. This story is told of a minister who put up at a certain hotel. The proprietor noticed that he was rather loose in his talk, smoked, played cards with the other guests, and said no grace at mealtimes. When the minister was leaving he claimed the usual reduction from his bill. "Oh no!" said the hotel-keeper. "You ate like a sinner, you talked like a sinner, you lived like a sinner and you shall pay like a sinner."

By and by the faithful witness of John Hawkins in that dormitory began to bear fruit. The first boy he led to Christ was his own chum, Charlie. On the night of his conversion John had been advised by Mr. Lawler not to go with unconverted friends. "Chum up with another Christian and talk with him about Jesus." Such wise counsel Johnny was determined to obey. It

meant parting with Charlie and his heart was heavy at the thought of it for he loved Charlie dearly. However he was determined to make a clean-cut and to burn his boats behind him. Next morning he went to Charlie and told him with tears in his eyes, "Charlie! you and I must part."

Charlie was thunderstruck and could only reply, "Why, Johnny?" John explained that he had given his heart to Christ and could no longer be friends with one who was not a Christian. Charlie became very concerned and soon he also expressed his determination to put his trust in Christ. Together they knelt down in a quiet corner of the dormitory. John prayed for Charlie, and Charlie prayed for himself and rose from his knees "a new creature in Christ Jesus." From that time Charlie also took his stand for Christ. In later years he went to America, became secretary of a large Y.M.C.A. and did a great work for God.

One by one other boys followed his example and accepted Christ as Saviour, until, within a short time of John's conversion, every boy in the dormitory knelt to pray. So much may result from the steadfast witness of one faithful soul. Here we see coming events casting their shadows

before. Three months after the conversion of young Hawkins, God sent through the Home a wave of salvation-blessing which swept the great majority of the boys into the Kingdom of God. It was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit and the results were enduring. These boys became earnest Christians and in after years they continued to bear witness for Jesus Christ.

One interesting result of the revival was the starting of a prayer meeting by the boys themselves. They felt they would like to have a meeting all their own, for in this way they could freely express themselves. John Hawkins, as leader, was deputed to approach the Governor in the matter. The request was quite unprecedented but Mr. Gray wisely granted them permission to use his own room. The boys were delighted and at the opening meeting the room was packed to suffocation. John was unanimously chosen as chairman and they had a wonderful time of blessing. The meetings were continued and took the form of praise, prayer and testimony. As time went on, John and others gave simple Bible talks. Thus at thirteen years of age the young gipsy boy found himself the leader of a combined prayer meeting and

Bible class. Between fifty and sixty boys attended this meeting regularly and many were won for Christ. This is an evidence, even at that early age, not only of his precocity but also of his wonderful gift of leadership.

CHAPTER III

THE BOY PREACHER

NEWS of the work of grace in the Carter Home soon spread to the outer world. Mr. Gray, the master, was naturally proud of this movement among his boys and spoke of it to various evangelical leaders in London. As a result, John Hawkins was asked out to give his testimony and later to preach in various churches and mission halls. He soon gained quite a reputation as the "Boy Preacher" and large audiences gathered to hear him.

His first public witness for Christ outside the Home was given at a conference for Christian boys arranged by Mr. Huntington Stone at Greenwich. Mr. Stone was a wealthy, earnest Christian gentleman, in fellowship with those who are sometimes known as "Brethren." He gave away large sums of money for missionary work and was deeply interested in the moral and spiritual welfare of boys. He had a large hall in Greenwich, where special conferences

for boys were held each year. All the Boys' Homes, Schools and Orphanages in the London area were invited to send deputations to the conferences. On one occasion Mr. Gray took a dozen boys, including young Hawkins, from Carter Home. It was a great experience for John. Several speakers addressed the large audience of boys. Then they had a sumptuous meal to which a large crowd of unconverted boys from the district had been invited. After this there was a Gospel meeting at which a number of Christian lads gave testimonies. During the singing of a hymn Mr. Gray tapped John on the shoulder and said, "Johnny, you have to speak next." John was taken aback but there was no way out. He mounted the platform like one in a dream and gave his testimony. Afterwards he had not the faintest idea what he had said but, when he sat down, the chairman ejaculated, "Praise the Lord!" and someone else shouted, "Hallelujah!"

A week later he was playing happily with the other boys in the school yard when a whistle was heard and John was called out to speak to Mr. T. Jones, Honorary Secretary of the Home. "Johnny," he said, "I want you to come to my hall to-morrow and give your testimony." He

tried to get out of it, for he was of a shy disposition, but Mr. Jones would take no refusal. He went but he did not do as well as he had done at Greenwich. The audience was composed of adults. John shook with nervousness and the only words he could stammer out were, "Jesus loves me and I love Jesus; I want you to love Him too." Then he broke down and tears began to flow. Immediately the atmosphere became tense and charged with spiritual power. Many hearts were softened that day and perhaps more was done by that simple spontaneous appeal than by many eloquent words.

After this Mr. Gray and Mr. Jones took him out frequently to meetings. He overcame his nervousness and was soon able to give short addresses. He would take a text and expound it in his own way, relating it to his own experiences. Engagements multiplied and doors opened in all directions. The curious came to hear him and were caught in the Gospel net. Even at this early period he had a real gift for public speaking. His simple, direct, earnest style never failed to gain the ear of his hearers. With constant practice he became a forceful and eloquent preacher. Thus, in his early 'teens, he addressed crowded gatherings of adults and

young people all over London and was the means of winning many for Christ. Among the centres regularly visited in these early years were the Wesleyan Mission Hall, Dulwich, the Wheatsheaf Hall, the Baptist Church, Thornton Heath and Battersea Park Tabernacle.

Here is an incident which is typical of many that marked the work of those early days: The "Boy Preacher" was advertised to speak in the Wesleyan Mission Hall, Dulwich. The place was crowded and his message made a deep impression on the congregation. At the close of the service a man waited behind and said to John, "I came to criticise the 'Boy Preacher' but as the service proceeded I had to sit in judgment on myself. I feel that I am unprepared to meet my God." After some conversation the man gave his heart to Christ and was soundly converted.

CHAPTER IV

FORMATIVE YEARS

THE adolescent period is in some ways the most critical in a man's life. At the early age of nineteen John Hawkins became Pastor-Evangelist of one of the most important branches of the Railway Mission. The five or six years preceding this appointment were formative years, in which many influences reacted upon his life and helped to mould his character.

As we saw in a former chapter, he served his apprenticeship as a shoemaker in the Home. Work is always an important factor in the development of character; and the young gipsy lad, after his conversion, had to settle down to the prosaic tasks of his trade. This discipline was all to the good. Side by side with his week-end preaching went on the busy workaday life at the shoemaker's bench. There he learned diligence, patience and many other lessons. As Henry Drummond says, "A workshop is not merely a place for making engines. It is a place

for making men." These words were true of the shoemaker's bench at the Carter Home in which John Hawkins spent so many busy hours.

It is interesting to note in passing that the illustrious William Carey, the Apostle of India, was a shoemaker. He thought of the heathen, and dreamed of the evangelization of the world, as he toiled at the cobbler's bench. The great D. L. Moody, the world-famous evangelist, was also connected with the same trade. It was in a shoe store in Boston that he was led to Christ by his Sunday School teacher.

It must not be inferred that religion made young Hawkins gloomy, unnatural or "goody-goody." On the contrary, he was full of youthful vivacity, always fond of fun, and ready for games of all sorts. During the days of his apprenticeship and later, he excelled at cricket and other sports. He was especially good at running. This proficiency stood him in good stead later on, when, at Railway Mission outings, he used to win many a race. He has been fond of walking all his life, and his present physical fitness, which is remarkable in a man of his years, may be attributed largely to his fondness for physical exercise.

The first church he attended was Grafton Square Baptist Church, Clapham. He was a

member of the Bible Class there for a short time. One of his contemporaries in this class was David H. Moore, afterwards Minister of Vernon Square Church, King's Cross. In 1885 Kenyon Baptist Church was founded at Solon Road, Brixton, by the Rev. James Douglas, M.A. The new cause was sponsored by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, who induced Mr. Douglas to take up the work and who transferred a number of his Tabernacle members to form the nucleus of the congregation. Mr. and Mrs. Gray, were among the number, and John Hawkins also attended the services in the new church. In the providence of God, this church was to play no small part in moulding his character. For several years during the most impressionable period of his life, Gipsy Hawkins was privileged to listen to the scholarly and evangelical ministry of Rev. James Douglas, then one of the leading Baptist ministers in the metropolis. The mind of the lad was saturated with the great fundamental principles of the Christian faith, such as the deity of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of His atoning work, and the veracity and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

Rev. James Douglas was born on 15th April, 1845, and passed away on 17th May, 1920, aged

75 years. After a brilliant career at Glasgow University, where he graduated M.A. with Honours, he held successive pastorates at Kirkcaldy, Blackburn, Falmouth, Ilfracombe and finally Kenyon Church, Brixton. At the Baptist Union Assembly meetings at Leicester he stood forth as the champion of evangelical truths, and denounced the rationalistic theories which were being advanced in certain quarters. This resulted in a very close and intimate friendship with Rev. C. H. Spurgeon who held similar views. Douglas was Spurgeon's right-hand man in the famous "Down-grade Controversy" and, in later years, he wrote a very fine *Life of Spurgeon*. He was a man of commanding personality, an evangelical stalwart, a great preacher and Bible expositor.

During these early years at Kenyon Church Mr. Douglas was at the height of his power and the church was a hive of activity. Young Hawkins soon began to take part in the open-air work of the church, and came under the notice of the minister. Mr. Douglas took a great interest in the lad and had many conversations with him. At the age of seventeen John Hawkins was baptised by Mr. Douglas and became a member of Kenyon Church. Sunday by Sunday he sat at the feet of Mr.

Douglas, drinking in his rich and suggestive expositions of the Word of God. These sermons, more than anything else, helped to define the Gipsy's theological views, and have moulded all his later ministry.

Another man who influenced Hawkins greatly at this period was Mr. W. T. Osborne, deacon and leader of the open-air work at Kenyon Church. Just about the time that Hawkins' apprenticeship was finishing, Mr. Osborne applied to the Master of the Carter Home for a lad to assist him in his boot-repairing business at Acre Lane, Brixton. John was chosen for the post, and the resulting friendship with Mr. Osborne was of the utmost value to him. Mr. Osborne was a man of sterling Christian character, well-read and deeply spiritual. He was also an excellent preacher, especially in the open air. He took a great liking to young Hawkins right away and showed the keenest interest in the spiritual development of the lad. Many hallowed conversations took place in that boot shop. Mr. Osborne was a deacon in Kenyon Church, and Mr. Douglas' sermons were keenly discussed by John and his master. In fact, their conversation ranged over the whole theological field. Next to the Rev. James Douglas, Mr. Osborne, in those early years,

exercised the greatest influence upon the life of the young preacher.

All the time he was working for Mr. Osborne, John was resident in the Carter Home. Unlike the other boys, he had no relatives or friends to whom he could be sent, now that his training was over. He stayed on with the Grays and was promoted to be a monitor or under-master in the Home. This meant that he had certain duties with regard to the boys in the Home, as well as his outside work. There was bred in him a sense of responsibility and he soon developed a gift for handling boys ; this stood him in good stead in after years.

He had other good friends besides the minister of Kenyon Church and Mr. Osborne. Mr. Gray, and his friend, Mr. J. W. C. Fegan (of "Mr. Fegan's Homes"), both took a great interest in John. Mr. Gray had been a master in Fegan's Home for Boys before taking over Carter Home. Through him John Hawkins was brought to Mr. Fegan's notice. Thus began a deep and lasting friendship, terminated only by the death of the latter. From the beginning Mr. Fegan took a benevolent interest in young Hawkins, encouraged him to preach, and gave him books to help him in his studies. Later on, when Gipsy Hawkins became a free-lance

evangelist he conducted many fruitful missions in association with Mr. Fegan.

The preaching gifts of the young shoemaker during this period were increasingly utilized. He usually attended morning service in Kenyon Church. But in the afternoons and evenings he went all over London preaching the Gospel; at first, in company with such men as Mr. Gray, and Mr. T. Jones and latterly by himself. God continued to bless his ministry to the salvation of souls. This constant preaching involved study, and a little room was set apart in which he could spend what leisure time he had with his Bible and his books. While the other lads were enjoying themselves outside, young Hawkins toiled on manfully to improve his mind, and to fit himself to be a preacher of the Gospel. The task was all the harder owing to his lack of any school education.

Did he then have no training whatsoever? This question may well be answered here. A Mr. and Mrs. Penny conducted a night school in the Carter Home once a week. John attended for one or two winters and learned the rudiments of reading, writing and simple arithmetic. The main text-book was the Scriptures. Rev. James Douglas, Mr. Osborne and others gave

the young preacher various books to help him. Some of these would appear to be rather heavy for a youth, but John studied them assiduously and derived great benefit from them. Among the works he read were the *Commentaries* of C.H.M., Barnes' *Notes*, Poole's *Annotations*, the works of Professor Candlish, Dean Farrar's *Life of Christ* and *Life of Saint Paul*. A perusal of Thomson's *The Land and the Book* awoke in him a strong desire to visit the Holy Land. It was not until some years later, however, that this desire was gratified.

When he became older he attended one winter session at the evening classes in Spurgeon's College. There he was introduced to the great classics of English literature, and learned to appreciate Shakespeare, Tennyson and Wordsworth. He also received Bible instruction and a smattering of Latin and Greek. But constant preaching and a consuming passion to win souls for Christ crowded out the desire for a higher education. Rightly or wrongly, he felt at that time that it was more important to win a soul for Christ than to master the Greek irregular verbs!

As a result of these classes, his own private reading and his discussions with Mr. Osborne,

young Hawkins cultivated a taste for the rhythm and beauty of language. It was his custom to read with a dictionary by his side. Thus he learned to appreciate the sweetness and variety of words, and became able to express himself in vigorous phraseology. Besides, practice brings perfection, even in preaching. Constant practice, under all conditions, developed in the youthful preacher a style all his own. He did much aggressive open-air work in the streets and back courts of London. It is a truism that the man who can hold the attention of a crowd in the open air is a preacher of no mean order.

While still in his 'teens, John Hawkins was invited to enter Spurgeon's College to undergo a course of intensive training for the ministry. Dr. Eugene Cronin, a well-known Christian physician, Treasurer and Chairman of Committee of the Carter Home, and a personal friend of C. H. Spurgeon, offered to defray the cost of such training. He spoke to Spurgeon himself about the youthful preacher. Spurgeon's reply was, "Let him go on as he is; the experience will do him no harm. But apply again in twelve months." Later on Dr. Cronin again approached Mr. Spurgeon who was now quite anxious for young Hawkins to enter Pastors' College. "He

is the kind of man we are looking for," he said, "one whom God is already using in the work of soul-winning." But John Hawkins did not feel led to fall in with these plans. While he appreciated very much the kindness of Dr. Cronin, he felt strongly that one so backward as himself in the rudiments of education would not be able to assimilate a college training. Further, as he said at the time, "If God has work for a converted gipsy lad to do, He will enable him to do it without his going through any college curriculum." He did not despise such training, but he felt that in his case it would be a waste of time.

In some ways it was perhaps just as well that Gipsy Hawkins did not enter college. It left him free to develop in his own way, it conserved his native originality and in later years it forced him to rely absolutely on God. The past fifty years have proved that God had indeed a work for him to do ; and, in doing it, the Gipsy has discovered the literal truth of the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee." His very weakness forced him to rely upon the almightiness of God. Throughout half a century Gipsy Hawkins has drawn upon the limitless resources of God, and his glad testimony is

that they have never failed him. "He faileth not." The career of the Gipsy is a wonderful example of what God can do with a life wholly yielded to Him. The great founder of the Salvation Army was able to say, "God has all there is of William Booth." With all humility, Gipsy Hawkins could say the same of himself. Early in his Christian career he dedicated himself unreservedly to Jesus Christ. That is the secret of his long and useful life.

CHAPTER V

THE RAILWAY MISSION EVANGELIST

Not long after Dr. Cronin's attempt to persuade young Hawkins to enter Spurgeon's College, a vacancy occurred in the South London branch of the Railway Mission. Dr. Cronin, who was a member of the Central Committee, recommended his young protégé for the post. The appointment was duly made, and at the age of nineteen, Gipsy Hawkins found himself in charge of the large Railway Mission Hall at Wandsworth Road. For the next fourteen years he was closely associated with Railway Mission work in London and throughout the country.

The work at Wandsworth Road was a heavy responsibility for one so young. The South London branch of the Railway Mission was one of the earliest branches to be formed, and had some claim to be the parent branch of the whole movement in the British Isles. It was started at Clapham, then removed to Vauxhall Bridge, and finally settled at Wandsworth Road.

When Gipsy Hawkins took charge of it in 1891, there were nearly five thousand railway employees resident within a radius of one mile from the Mission Hall. That gives some idea of the nature and extent of the young evangelist's "parish." The main hall seated four hundred, and there was a lesser hall which could hold one hundred and ten. At first the attendances were small; but the numbers steadily grew until the place became too small for the crowds who sought admission. Towards the end of his period of service at Wandsworth Road, a building fund was started, with a view to securing larger premises. The plans included a large hall seating at least eight hundred, a clear indication of the success attending Gipsy Hawkins' ministry. For twelve years the Wandsworth Road Hall was a throbbing centre of spiritual power. There was hardly a week without conversions.

The Gipsy soon gathered round him a loyal band of earnest workers who ably supported him in all his efforts. Evangelistic services were held on Sundays and other evenings, while a flourishing Band of Hope met on Tuesdays, a large women's meeting on Thursdays, and a well-attended Prayer Meeting every Saturday. There was also a Sunday-school with three hundred

scholars. Much aggressive open-air work was done in the neighbourhood. The Wandsworth Road Mission Choir, ably led by Mr. William George, a converted music-hall singer, was the best choir in the district.

The years at Wandsworth Road were very strenuous for young Hawkins. He was young and comparatively untrained. In addition to much visitation among the railwaymen, he had the supervision of the work at the Hall, and the constant strain of getting new material for addresses. The slenderness of his own resources forced him to rely upon God, and to make an intensive study of the Scriptures. In the discipline of these twelve years a sure foundation was laid for the widespread evangelistic labours of later days.

His mornings were devoted to study. The Gipsy's lack of educational advantages made this no easy matter. He had to read with a dictionary at his elbow, and this he consulted every time he came across a new word. He "toiled terribly" to improve his mind, and not without success. Prayer and perseverance carried him through and he managed to cope with all the demands made upon him.

In addition to his duties as Pastor-Evangelist

at Wandsworth Road, Gipsy Hawkins had to undertake special missions in other Railway Mission centres all over the country. He well remembers his first campaign of this sort, held at Lowestoft. A new Railway Mission Hall had just been opened there and the Gipsy was sent to conduct a fortnight's Gospel mission. He went in fear and trembling, but the Lord gave wonderful blessing, and many souls came out for Christ. This led to the opening of other doors. The Gipsy became increasingly well-known and acceptable, until latterly he was set apart by the Railway Mission authorities to devote his whole time to such campaigns. In January, 1904, he was freed from all responsibility at Wandsworth Road that he might engage in this wider ministry.

The period under review was notable for several domestic and personal reasons. On 7th September, 1895, Gipsy Hawkins married Miss Isabella Cameron, a younger sister of Mrs. Gray, the matron at Carter Home. She had come from Spean Bridge, Scotland, to act as assistant matron at the Home. John Hawkins was now an officer there, and a close friendship sprang up between the young people. In course of time this feeling ripened into love,

and, after a happy courtship, the couple were married at Kenyon Baptist Church, Brixton, by the Rev. James Douglas. After a brief honeymoon Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins took up house at 274 Clapham Road, London. Theirs was a singularly happy union, and Mrs. Hawkins has been a true helpmeet to her husband during all the succeeding years.

Some time previous to the marriage, Mr. Gray had passed away. On his deathbed he asked Gipsy Hawkins to take care of Mrs. Gray and Jessie, his daughter. They came to live with Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins at Clapham Road. On the 13th September 1898, after years of suffering from chronic rheumatism, Mrs. Gray was called home. Jessie Gray was given a first-class education and secured a good Civil Service appointment.

Reverting to the work at Wandsworth Road we recount some of the notable conversions that took place there. Only eternity will reveal how many found Christ in that hall. Here are some typical cases of decision for Christ.

Jack Norval was a prize-fighter who had won many prizes in the ring. One Sunday he came to Wandsworth Road and enjoyed the service, especially the singing. He came back several

times and one night he passed into the enquiry room where he gave his heart to Jesus. He vowed, "From this time forward, by the help of God, I'll never again lift my hand against a fellow-man. I'll fight the devil and the devil only." Jack became a keen open-air worker, and loved to preach the Gospel outside his own home. When he preached the neighbours listened respectfully, for his character agreed with his profession. All could see the change in his life.

William George had been a popular music-hall singer and was a great favourite at smoking concerts. He came to the Wandsworth Road hall and was converted. Then he resolved, "I've sung my last song for the devil. From now on my song shall be of Jesus." Henceforth he dedicated his great gift of song to the Master, and for many years he was to Gipsy Hawkins what Sankey had been to Moody. He acted as choir-master at the mission hall, and for several years was selected to lead the united district choir which took part in the great choir festivals at Crystal Palace. His solos and the choral pieces sung by his choir attracted to the services at Wandsworth Road crowds of people who otherwise would never have been reached.

William Dodd was a thorough-going atheist who used to lecture at secularist meetings in the Hall of Science, Battersea Park. He had read widely and thought deeply. His wife attended Wandsworth Road hall, mainly to hear the singing of the choir. One night she accepted Christ as Saviour and confessed it to her husband. He raised no objection, but personally remained unmoved. The Dodds had a fine little daughter aged eleven who was also led to decision for Christ. Not long after, she sickened and, though everything possible was done to save her life, she died. Before the end she said to her father, "Daddy, don't weep for me; I'm going to heaven to be with Jesus. Mother is coming later; won't you come too?" Just before the funeral, Gipsy Hawkins visited Mr. Dodd and was led to speak to the stricken man about how timid sheep are induced to cross a river by hearing the bleating of a lamb, borne across in the arms of the shepherd. The truth thus simply put reached the father's heart and he knelt down by the coffin and gave himself to God. He became a great Bible student and an assiduous soul-winner.

Gipsy Hawkins tells two real-life incidents which centre round the great text, John iii,

verse 16. These stories concern railwaymen and are therefore due a place in the present chapter. For the sake of vividness, we shall endeavour to recount these incidents in the Gipsy's own racy style.

One day he was at the head office of the Railway Mission in Adam Street, Strand, London, when the General Secretary, Mr. Richard Nixon, came in.

"Oh, Mr. Hawkins," he said, "I am glad to see you. A lady has just sent word about a dying railwayman at Earlsfield. He is unconverted and in great distress, and no minister has been to see him. Can you call upon him?"

"Certainly," said Gipsy Hawkins, "I will go at once." He put on his heavy overcoat and took the first train to Earlsfield. Soon he was standing by the bedside of the dying man, who had been involved in an accident at Waterloo station. The man's physical pain was as nothing compared with the distress and agony of his soul. The poor fellow knew that he was dying, and realised that he had no Saviour, no refuge, no hope beyond the grave.

The gipsy read the third chapter of John's Gospel. When he got to the sixteenth verse he was about to read on, when the stricken man said,

“Excuse me, sir, but will you read that verse again?” For the second time the Gipsy read the wonderful words, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The man’s face lit up as with the glory of God, and he exclaimed, “I’ve got it; I’ve got it!” The Gipsy was nonplussed. “What have you got, my brother?” The dying railwayman replied, “Oh sir, I’ve got the everlasting life.”

The man had been laid up for four months. He had had plenty of time to think about God and the world to come. Gipsy Hawkins was the first to present the Gospel to him and, with all the eagerness and simplicity of a child, he took the gift of God which is everlasting life.

The Gipsy will never forget how the dying man stretched out his thin wasted hand and bade him good-bye. “Thank God for sending you here. If we never meet again on earth, I hope we shall meet in heaven.” Gipsy Hawkins grasped his hand warmly and replied, “My dear friend, we are sure to meet in heaven; for my Saviour is now your Saviour, my hope is your hope, my eternal home is your eternal home.”

The evangelist could not go to Earlsfield next day. On the third he received a letter from the man's wife in which she said, "My beloved husband passed away at 6 o'clock to-night, and the last thing he did was to repeat John iii, verse 16. Then, almost with his dying breath, he whispered, "I've got it ; I've got it."

The other incident took place in Glasgow. Some thirty-five years ago Gipsy Hawkins was conducting a mission for railwaymen in a large marquee in Parliamentary Road, Glasgow. The power of God fell upon the meetings, and the interest increased nightly. Many souls found the Saviour.

One night, at the close of the usual after-meeting, an Inspector named Ballantyne asked the Gipsy to meet his men next day and invite them to the services. The Gipsy readily agreed and next morning he was at the Inspector's office. Mr. Ballantyne took the evangelist round and introduced him personally to all his men. Each man received a card announcing the special services and a warm invitation to attend.

As they were about to separate, Inspector Ballantyne said, "There is another man I would like you to see, but I am afraid to take you to him."

The Gipsy replied, "I shouldn't think you were afraid of anything!" for the Inspector was a tall powerful man.

"Oh, I am not afraid for myself," answered the Inspector, "but I fear that if I take you to see this man he will insult you and hurt your feelings."

"Never mind about that," was the Gipsy's reply, "I have been accustomed to rub shoulders with all sorts of men, and I should very much like to meet this man. Please take me to him."

"All right, Gipsy; you are asking for trouble and will have to take what is coming to you."

They went across the yard to a shed where a man was repairing sacks. Eight years previously he had lost both his legs in an accident but, being an old employee, he had been kept on and allowed to repair sacks. All his life the man had been godless and wicked. The accident had not caused him to mend his ways but had made him more bitter than ever against God and religion.

It was a bright July morning. Gipsy Hawkins greeted the man warmly and for a time discussed things in general. Then the Gipsy said, "My dear friend, my Master has sent me to you with

a message and here it is." He quoted John iii, verse 16, in full. The man gazed up at him and grunted, "Bah! That's an old nursery tale. I heard it sixty years ago, before you were born, and there is nothing in it."

"Perhaps you did hear it sixty years ago, and during these sixty years tens of thousands have been won for Christ through this message. Why don't you believe it and be saved?"

Again the man looked up, saying, "Go away, mister; I want neither you nor your message."

The Gipsy answered "Certainly I will go if you wish it. Although I am only a gipsy I am too much of a gentleman to force my company on you. But listen to this; on your own confession you heard this message sixty years ago. Some day you will hear it for the last time. God will give you a last chance; it may be this morning. Take it, my dear friend; open your heart to Christ and you will have everlasting life. If you refuse the last chance your doom is sealed."

Next night Inspector Ballantyne came to Gipsy Hawkins with the sad news of this man's death. At breakfast, while in the act of lifting a cup of tea to his lips, his head fell back and in a moment his soul was in eternity.

Surely God had sent the Gipsy to the old man that morning that he might have one last opportunity of trusting Christ. But he spurned the message of life and passed into eternity "without God and without hope."

The same message came to these two men but how differently it was received by them. To one the glorious words of John iii, verse 16, were a "savour of life unto life." To the other the same words became "a savour of death unto death."

How solemn a responsibility rests upon those who are privileged to hear the word of life. To accept that word means pardon, salvation, eternal life; to reject it spells condemnation and spiritual death. "Take heed how you hear."

Gipsy Hawkins had many other remarkable experiences in special missions which he conducted in various parts of Britain under the auspices of the Railway Mission.

There was a particularly interesting case of household salvation at Worcester. The meetings were held in a large hall and there was a fine band of enthusiastic workers. At Shrub Hill station there was a railwayman called Harry —, whose life had been blighted by strong drink. He had been an inspector with a very good salary but his drinking habits had compelled the

railway company to degrade him more than once. At the time of Gipsy Hawkins' visit to Worcester this man was working as an ordinary porter. The company had threatened that if he did not go straight he would be dismissed altogether.

At that station there were some godly, earnest Christian men who were much concerned over Harry's downfall. They put their heads together and determined to win their comrade for Christ during the Gipsy's campaign. Accordingly they agreed to pray for Harry each day at twelve o'clock, that he might be delivered from the bonds of strong drink and be led to Christ. For a whole month previous to the start of the mission this united prayer continued daily. In the week before the Gipsy's arrival several of the men visited Harry's home and invited the family to attend the special meetings.

The opening night of the campaign came but there was no sign of Harry or his wife. The women workers, including the wives of many of those who had been praying for Harry, got together and discussed the situation. They agreed upon aggressive action. One of their number was to call on Monday at Harry's home and invite Harry, his wife and his son to the services. On Tuesday another was to call and

this was to continue all the week. Every day for a week a different woman, with the love of Christ in her heart and the joy of God's salvation showing in her face, called at Harry's house.

On Sunday this conversation took place at Harry's tea-table :

The wife looking across at her husband :
" Harry, are you going to the Railway Mission Hall to-night ? "

Harry : " No ! I'm not."

Harry's wife : " Well, Harry, I think you should. The boy and I are going. Come on, let's all go together. There *must* be something special on. I don't know what it is ; but these women have kept me busy all week answering the door."

Harry : " I'm not going and that's the end of it."

That night Harry's wife and his son went to the meeting. They had no intention of being converted and did not understand all that was said ; but the very power of God was present in the hall that evening and among the first to go into the enquiry room were Harry's wife and her son. They trusted Christ and the joy of God's salvation filled their hearts.

When they returned home, to their intense

surprise, the father was in. For years he had not come home on Sundays till the public-house had closed. They told him what had taken place and then sang the hymn which had been sung in the enquiry room, "O happy day that fixed my choice." It is customary for the Gipsy to get new converts and workers to clasp hands and sing this hymn at the end of an after-meeting.

Harry then said to his wife, "I would not go with you to-night to the Railway Mission because I had arranged to meet my pals. Twenty minutes after you had gone, when I got to the door, an unseen power gripped me and I could not go out. After a few minutes I tried again and the same thing happened. Four times I tried to leave this room and every time I was stopped at the door. I can't understand it; it's a mystery to me."

The boy then spoke up: "I'll tell you what it is; it's the power of God. The very same power gripped mother and me at the hall and took us into the enquiry room. The men said they had been praying for you for a month and they expect you to be converted during this mission. Dad, I reckon their prayers are being answered. Mother and I have been converted.

Wouldn't ours be a happy home if you were converted too?"

Harry went to bed sober that night but he could not sleep. Next day his shift was from twelve noon till twelve midnight. By this time he was under deep conviction of sin. He went to the foreman and asked if he could get off at seven o'clock that night.

"What for, Harry?" enquired his foreman.

"Well," said Harry, "Gipsy Hawkins is having meetings at the Railway Mission Hall. My wife and my son went there last night and they were converted. They came home full of joy. I would like to go myself to-night and see if I can be converted too."

"All right, Harry," said the foreman, "you go; and I will pray for you that you may be converted."

Harry came that night and drank in the message. When the appeal for decision was made, up went Harry's big hand and he left the hall "a new creature in Christ Jesus".

Gipsy Hawkins concluded the mission on the Friday of that week and a large crowd of converts and Christian workers came to see him off. In his enthusiasm, Harry gave the Gipsy's hand a terrific squeeze and said, with

tears running down his cheeks, "Gipsy, I have only been converted one week, but this has been the happiest week in my life."

This remarkable incident is an object-lesson in the power of persistent believing prayer. What miracles might be wrought if only believers banded themselves together for definite prayer, and were imbued with the same zeal and sanctified ingenuity possessed by these Christian railwaymen of Worcester!

Gipsy Hawkins had another striking experience at Wolverton in 1902. At the carriage works of the London and North Western Railway Company there, nearly four thousand men were employed. The Gipsy, accompanied by Mrs. Hawkins and several other workers, started meetings in a huge tent in the town about the middle of August. Tremendous interest was aroused. Three meetings were held each weekday, and four on Sundays. Frequently as many as one thousand people were present, and the whole district was moved for Christ. There were many remarkable cases of conversion, but the most outstanding was that of the "Rowdy Dozen."

The young men of Wolverton were notorious for Sabbath-breaking and godlessness. Sunday

was spent in gambling and drinking. A band of these young men, known as the "Rowdy Dozen", were ringleaders in all kinds of mischief. Every member of the gang had done something outrageously wicked in order to qualify for membership. They came to the tent one Sunday evening to upset the meeting and created much disturbance. Some of the older men present wanted to put them out, but the Gipsy refused to sanction this course of action. They came back more than once. At last, one night, Joe Little, the leader of the gang, publicly surrendered to Christ. He knelt at the penitent form and cried for mercy. Some of his pals followed his example and, within a week, the whole dozen were won for Christ. This became the talk of the town. The "Rowdy Dozen" formed themselves into an evangelistic band, and went round the neighbouring villages preaching and singing the Gospel. No less than three of them subsequently became ordained ministers of the Gospel.

The Wolverton campaign was only one of many such, held in Railway Mission centres all over the British Isles. Fruitful missions were conducted more than once at all the largest Railway Mission halls, including Stratford in

London, Preston, Norwich, Springburn in Glasgow, Abbeyhill and Gorgie in Edinburgh.

During his fourteen years' connection with the Railway Mission, Gipsy Hawkins made the acquaintance of many eminent Christian gentlemen who were interested in the work of the Mission. He was specially indebted to Lord Radstock, Lord Kinnaird, Mr. Albert A. Head, at that time Chairman of Keswick Convention, Mr. T. A. Denny, Sir George Williams, founder of the Young Men's Christian Association, Mr. Matthew Henry Hodder, Chairman of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Mr. G. E. Morgan, of Morgan and Scott, and Mr. Gurney Shepherd. These friends were in the habit of presiding at the Gipsy's meetings and conferences.

CHAPTER VI

FREELANCE EVANGELISM IN BRITAIN

IN August, 1905, Gipsy Hawkins was led to sever his connection with the Railway Mission. The reason for this step was that he had been receiving numerous and pressing invitations to conduct special missions for large churches and other religious bodies. These calls could not be answered so long as he was confined to Railway Mission work. Therefore, after earnest prayer and consultation with Christian friends, he resigned from the Railway Mission in order to become a freelance evangelist. In after years, although no longer on the staff of the Railway Mission, he conducted many fruitful campaigns among railwaymen, and revisited many of the branches of the Mission.

The period of his life under consideration covers nine years, from August, 1905, till the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914. During these years Gipsy Hawkins was busier than ever in evangelistic work. There was an

increasing demand for his services, and he visited large missions, churches and groups of churches in all the larger towns and cities of Britain. Everywhere God honoured his ministry to the salvation of souls. Scores and hundreds found Christ in the services he conducted.

From the mass of reports and press cuttings that belong to this period we select some typical instances of his work. In March, 1909, he had a united campaign at Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. All the Presbyterian churches in the town supported the effort, which aroused an extraordinary degree of interest. Large gatherings met in the Town Hall and many decisions for Christ were registered. It was said at the time that Lockerbie had not experienced such a religious awakening for over fifty years. Here, as at many other places, a crowded congregation listened with rapt attention to the touching story of the Evangelist's life.

In September, 1906, Gipsy Hawkins had a three weeks' special mission in Abbeyhill Railway Mission Hall, Edinburgh, during which many souls found Christ. One feature of the mission was the open-air work and witness marches. One Saturday evening a Drunkards' Rescue March was organised. A large band of

workers paraded the streets about ten o'clock, collected as many drunkards as possible and returned to the hall for a late meeting at eleven o'clock. Gipsy Hawkins was able to control the crowd in a remarkable way, and several reclaimed drunkards witnessed to their conversion. They were heard with intense interest. This is only one instance of the Gipsy's originality and of his willingness to use novel methods in the great work of soul-winning.

During this period the Gipsy had several fruitful campaigns in Glasgow. At the close of one meeting a gentleman came to see him and said, "Mr. Hawkins, I cannot be a Christian. It would cost me five thousand pounds. All my money is invested in the liquor trade and I could not be a real Christian and carry on in that business."

Gipsy Hawkins replied, "My dear friend, your first duty is to get right with God, whatever that may cost. After that it will be God's duty, I say it reverently, to look after you. God will be no man's debtor. No one has ever made a real sacrifice for truth and righteousness and God and been the loser for it."

Like the rich young ruler in the parable, the man went away sorrowful. He sold his soul and

his eternal interests in Christ Jesus for five thousand pounds. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

There was one man who made a greater sacrifice. Gipsy Hawkins was a great friend of Mr. F. N. Charrington, "the man who gave away a million pounds." Mr. Charrington was the founder of the work at the Great Assembly Hall, Mile End Road, London, the largest Gospel Hall in the United Kingdom. The Gipsy had several campaigns there and used to conduct services for a month at a time.

Mr. Charrington was the son and heir of one of the partners of the wealthy brewing firm of Charrington and Company. After his conversion he tried to carry on religious work while maintaining an interest in the brewery. Eventually his conscience compelled him to leave the business and renounce a fortune approaching a million pounds.

The actual circumstances which led him to take this step were related to Gipsy Hawkins by Charrington himself. One day he took the Gipsy down a miserable street in a very poor part of the East End of London and showed him a squalid public-house.

"I was coming along this street one Saturday night," said Charrington, "when I saw a poor, ill-clad woman with two or three little children peering in at the door of the public-house. She arrested my attention and I stopped to see what would happen. Presently she went in and said to a man standing at the bar, 'Frank, the children and I are starving; give me some money for food before you spend it all on drink.'

"The man was furious because she had spoken to him in front of his mates. He took her outside and struck her a blow that would have felled an ox. I looked down at the woman and then on the door of the public house I saw 'Charrington and Company's Fine Ales.' The blow that felled that woman knocked me clean out of the brewery business for ever."

Thus was F. N. Charrington led to give up a fortune for the sake of Christ and his fellow-men; one of the noblest sacrifices ever made by mortal man.

On hearing this story from Charrington's own lips, Gipsy Hawkins was constrained to ask him, "Well, do you regret doing it?"

"Regret it, Hawkins?" Charrington replied, "I do not. I would do the same again to-morrow;

God has rewarded me a thousand-fold in this life, to say nothing of the life to come."

Gipsy Hawkins has used this story repeatedly as an illustration of how God rewards those who make sacrifices for Him. The man who has Christ is truly rich; rich here and rich hereafter; rich in the possession of eternal life and the favour of God. "Lay up treasure in heaven."

Two incidents which the Gipsy is fond of telling at children's meetings belong to this period. One concerns a campaign held in a Congregational church at Bury St. Edmund's, under the auspices of the Railway Mission. After one meeting Gipsy Hawkins spoke to every grown-up about decision for Christ. Then they had a time of silent prayer and the Gipsy closed the meeting. One little girl of thirteen years of age waited behind.

"Have you given your heart to Christ?" said Gipsy Hawkins.

"No, but I want to," replied the girl, with tears in her eyes.

The Gipsy had the joy of leading her to Christ. He rebuked himself for having overlooked her and for concentrating solely upon the adults. Probably neither the Gipsy nor the other workers

thought that very much had been accomplished that night.

Ten years later Gipsy Hawkins was conducting a campaign in the Congregational church at Stowmarket, Suffolk. The minister of this church, Rev. John Snell, had been led to Christ by the Gipsy during a campaign at Guildford. Hearing the call of God, John Snell had taken a course of training for the ministry and, after ordination, had settled at Stowmarket.

In the course of his long evangelistic career the Gipsy has received great kindness from a large number of hosts and hostesses all over the country. At Stowmarket he was the guest of a wealthy Christian gentleman. On his arrival, his host took him round to the garage and pointing to a luxurious motor car, he said, "That car and my chauffeur are at your disposal as long as you reside here. Drive where you like."

One day Gipsy Hawkins asked the chauffeur to take him to Bury St. Edmunds. On arrival he sought out the minister of the church in which the mission had been held ten years before. In the course of conversation the Gipsy asked how the girl who had been converted at his mission there ten years previously was getting on. The minister replied, "She is the best worker we have got."

Fifteen years after this the Gipsy was having a campaign at Oxford for Rev. William Gough, of St. Ebbe's Church. At the first week-night meeting, after Gipsy Hawkins had spoken, a lady rose and said to the vicar, who was in the chair, "May I say a few words?"

"Certainly," replied the vicar.

"It is a great joy for me," she said, "to meet my spiritual father, Gipsy Hawkins. Twenty-five years ago he led me to Christ at the Congregational church in Bury St. Edmund's. Since then I have never looked back. Jesus is more precious to me now than ever before."

These words created quite a sensation in the church.

After the meeting the Gipsy had a talk with the lady. He asked her what she was doing in Oxford.

"Oh," she replied, "I am now a Professor in a Ladies' College here."

This incident is only one of many in which Gipsy Hawkins' converts have reached positions of eminence and responsibility in the scholastic, business or religious worlds. It also answers the question as to whether young people brought to Christ as a result of evangelistic campaigns really make good Christians. Undoubtedly some

do go back spiritually ; but scores and hundreds stand firm and become valuable workers in the Lord's vineyard.

The other incident took place at Leamington and illustrates the importance of taking children seriously. The Gipsy had given rather a lengthy Bible lecture and decided not to have an after-meeting. He invited any anxious souls to wait behind after the service. The large congregation filed out, and no one appeared to be waiting. He put his Bible away and prepared to leave. Then he noticed two little girls and a boy who obviously desired to be spoken to.

"Hallo," he said. "What do you want?"

"We want to give our hearts to Christ," was the reply.

The Gipsy pulled out his watch and said, "It is very late. You had better go home. We have a special children's meeting on Friday. Come back then, and we'll have a talk about the matter."

At this the boy began to cry.

"Oh," he said, "I deliver weekly papers on Friday and can't come to the meeting. I should like to be saved to-night."

Instantly Gipsy Hawkins saw his mistake and said to the boy, "You're right and I'm wrong."

They all knelt down in the aisle of that church and the three children accepted Christ as Saviour. That boy grew up to become a preacher of the Gospel. He is Rev. Henry Fletcher, a well-known and greatly respected Christian minister.

The Gipsy never forgot that rebuke, given quite unconsciously by the little boy at Leamington. Ever after he was most careful to deal with all children who showed the least desire to trust in Christ, and thousands of boys and girls in many parts of the world acknowledge him as their spiritual father.

Verily the children's chorus is true,

“I'm not too young to come to Jesus,
For He loves a little child.”

The Master says, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.”

The Gipsy paid several visits to Glasgow during this period, and conducted missions in Trinity United Free Church, Dalmarnock Congregational Church and other centres. A fruitful campaign in Wellington Church Mission, Glasgow, is commemorated in a very appreciative letter from the minister, Dr. George H. Morrison, which has been preserved.

Campaigns were also conducted under the

auspices of Dundee United Evangelistic Association, and the Gordon Mission, Aberdeen.

Gipsy Hawkins was one of the special missionaries in connection with the Forward Movement initiated by the National Free Church Council in England, and he conducted several fruitful campaigns in the London area, notably at Isleworth and St. Margaret's.

In association with his life-long friend, Mr. J. W. C. Fegan, the Gipsy shared in many evangelistic efforts in the villages and towns of Buckinghamshire, especially those adjacent to the Fegan Orphanage at Stony Stratford. In the summer, these campaigns took the form of tent missions. The Gipsy delights in this kind of work.

Not many nonconformist evangelists can claim to have received the "laying on of hands" from a bishop! The Gipsy had this rare experience at the hands of the late bishop of London, Dr. Winnington Ingram. These were the circumstances. Gipsy Hawkins had agreed to conduct a special mission at St. George's Church, Kew Gardens. Neighbouring churches also decided to have a campaign, with several priests as missionaries. The Bishop of London expressed a desire to conduct an inaugural service and

“admit” the missionaries, including Gipsy Hawkins.

The great day arrived and, at lunch, the vicar of St. George’s said to the Gipsy, “Have you brought your robes?” The Gipsy replied that he was not accustomed to walk about in petticoats! However, the vicar insisted that it was necessary for Gipsy Hawkins to be robed like the others, and he was duly fitted with a cassock and surplice.

In the afternoon, the bishop, with the local clergy, church choirs, and sidesmen, formed up and marched to the west door of the church to “admit” the missionaries. When the missionaries were all robed and ready the Gipsy said, nervously, “You gents might go on in front and I’ll bring up the rear.” This was greeted with roars of laughter for, in all such ecclesiastical processions, the bishop himself brings up the rear, which is the place of honour! This was explained to the Gipsy, and he said, “All right, then; but please put another man beside me, and whatever he does, I’ll do.”

At last the service began, and it was most impressive. The bishop first addressed the missionaries, reminding them of their great opportunity and solemn responsibility. They must do

nothing to grieve the Spirit of God. Then Dr. Ingram exhorted the congregation on their duty to support God's servants in the great task of soul-winning. Finally the bishop put his hands on the head of each missionary, giving him his episcopal blessing. To this extent Gipsy Hawkins can claim to have received ordination.

A brief description of the Gipsy, penned in 1907, will give us some idea of his personal appearance and preaching style during this period.

“Dark, of medium height, firmly-built and well-set, with fine gleaming eyes and strong characteristic gipsy features, Mr. Hawkins is a powerful personality. His thought is expressed in pure English, enhanced by wide reading and enriched by ripe experience; while his delivery is impressive without heaviness and bright without lightness.”

Twice did Gipsy Hawkins change his home address during these years. In June, 1907, he removed from Clapham Road to 33 Cedars Road. In February, 1914, he removed to his present home at 11 Rowfant Road, Balham, London, S.W.17. Many ministers and Christian workers have reason to remember this address with gratitude, having received there the kindly

hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins. During the Great War, Mr. P. T. McRostie, the well-known and much-loved Superintendent of the Tent Hall, Glasgow, stayed at Rowfant Road on his way to and from France, where he spent a period of service with the British troops.

CHAPTER VII

EUROPEAN TOURS

THE years preceding the Great War were notable in Gipsy Hawkins' life on account of his numerous evangelistic tours in foreign countries. First he visited the Continent and spent some time in Italy, Sicily and France. Next he took a trip to Canada, the first of many such. Finally he spent six months on an extended tour of the Near and Far East, in the course of which he visited Egypt, Palestine, Ceylon and India. The story of these tours, illustrated by many beautiful lantern slides, has been a feature of the Gipsy's evangelistic campaigns in recent years.

An account of the first of his many continental tours is partly given in a booklet subsequently published, entitled, *Special Mission to Italy, Sicily and France*.

The genesis of that first continental tour is very interesting and thoroughly typical of the man. Gipsy Hawkins had saved up the sum of one hundred pounds, not without considerable

difficulty. He determined to use this money to defray the cost of an evangelistic tour abroad; surely a remarkable instance of the Gipsy's altruism and passion for souls. How many Christian people to-day would spend their savings thus? He decided to visit the sites of the seven churches of Asia Minor, distributing tracts and preaching the Gospel as he had opportunity.

Accordingly, he left from London on 7th September, 1908, in company with Rev. D. M. Cameron, minister of Union Tabernacle, Wandsworth, and Mr. Stephen Burrowes, Superintendent of the Sailors' Rest Aid Society. His fellow-travellers were going to visit several of the Sailors' Rest centres in Italy and Sicily.

The party halted first at Genoa where a visit was paid to the famous Campo Santo cemetery which is noted for its unique and beautiful statuary. Here a noteworthy incident occurred. They met a party of missionaries on their way to the Far East. One of the missionaries recognised Gipsy Hawkins immediately. During a tent mission at Aberdeen, as a young lad of seventeen, he had accepted Christ as Saviour. The Gipsy had said to him afterwards: "Come out boldly for God; take up some work for Him

and count for something in the battle of life." And now, after seven years' training, the young man was going out to Korea as a medical missionary. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

In due course Gipsy Hawkins and his friends reached Rome. The Gipsy has visited this city on five different occasions. Many Gospels and copies of the New Testament in Italian were distributed here. The party visited the Mamertine Prison where St. Paul is said to have been confined. At this hallowed spot Gipsy Hawkins renewed his consecration. The Catacombs, where in times of persecution many of the early Christians had lived and died, made a deep impression upon the Gipsy. The subterranean passages are remarkable for nearly seventy thousand wall paintings and sculptured bas-reliefs, the work of the early Roman Christians. Every painting strikes the note of gladness and victory. Included in the itinerary was a visit to the Coliseum, with its tragic memories of gladiatorial contests and of Christian martyrdom. To the Gipsy this was indeed holy ground. Here the party held a solemn, heart-searching prayer meeting and prayed for courage to be faithful unto death even as the martyrs. At Rome, as Gipsy Hawkins

found that he could not carry out his intention of visiting Asia Minor, he decided to remain with his friends.

The party then proceeded to Naples and the Gipsy addressed some meetings at the Sailors' Rest, where he had the joy of pointing a young sailor to Christ. The men on this man's ship were a drinking, gambling, godless crowd. One night after a carousal he was on watch on the deck when he saw, immediately above his head, a star of surpassing brightness. It seemed to him like the very eye of God searching his heart, and he was brought under deep conviction of sin. There was no Christian on board in whom he could confide, but when his ship arrived at Naples, he went with all speed to the Sailors' Rest, knowing that he would receive spiritual help there. It was easy to point a man in that condition to the Saviour. After the lad had made his decision the Gipsy said: "Your case is rather unusual and there must be something to account for it. How about the members of your family? Are any of them Christians?" The man replied: "Sir, they are all Christians, and they have been praying for my conversion and speaking to me about Christ for years. I ran away to sea to avoid them." There, on a

foreign strand, the earnest prayers of years were answered and the sailor returned to his home in Cardiff, a new creature in Christ Jesus.

From Naples the party went on to Palermo and Catania in Sicily. Several days were spent in itineration throughout the district and Syracuse was visited. One day at a railway station, Gospels were given to a large party of Italian soldiers of the 89th Regiment of Infantry, who were on their way to Messina. Gipsy Hawkins had invited one of the officers to take a copy of Matthew's Gospel. When the officer discovered what it was, he said to his men, "These are English Protestant missionaries distributing Protestant scriptures. If you want a copy, now's your chance." The soldiers crowded round and soon the little stock of Gospels was exhausted.

There is a tragic sequel to this. Six weeks later, on 28th December, 1908, Messina was destroyed by an earthquake and, within a few seconds, seventy thousand people perished. These Italian soldiers and many other people in Messina who had received copies of the Scriptures were overwhelmed in this unparalleled disaster. Who knows but that some of the victims were converted to God through reading

these Gospel portions? "The entrance of Thy word giveth light."

On later continental tours the Gipsy visited many of the other cities of Europe, either alone or in company with other Christian workers. He went to Monte Carlo and saw the famous Casino, the greatest legalised gambling hell in the world. The Gipsy's views on gambling are brief and to the point. "The man who bets and wins is a thief, for he takes money from other people without giving any equivalent in goods or service. As for the man who bets and loses, he is a fool."

Gipsy Hawkins has given Bible readings at Mentone, where C. H. Spurgeon died. A story is current there about a lady who confessed to the great preacher that she was afraid to die. He replied, "My sister, God will not give you dying grace before the dying hour. What you need now is grace to live. When the time comes God will give you dying grace." Then he looked at her and, with that marvellous insight which the great preacher had into human character, he added, "My sister, I don't think you need trouble about dying; one of these days you will go for a long walk, you will come back tired, you will slip into bed and pass into a sound sleep, and,

when you wake in the morning, you will see the King in His beauty face to face."

Four months later her death occurred just as he had prophesied. She went for a long walk and returned very weary and tired; she passed into a sound sleep and without a twitch of pain she slipped into the palace of the King.

At Venice the Gipsy preached at the Sailors' Rest and for Dr. Robertson whose anti-Roman Catholic literature is famous the world over.

He is fond of telling the story of the young lady from the United States of America who was "doing" Italy. On her arrival at Venice she wrote to her father thus: "My dear dad, I have reached Venice but there must have been a flood here for I was compelled to go to my hotel in a boat."

The Gipsy seldom loses himself. His bump of locality is unusually well-developed. But one dark night he *was* lost in Milan. This had an amusing sequel. Following his usual custom in such circumstance, he hailed a taxi, giving the name of his hotel. Judge of his surprise when the taxi drove him just round the corner to the hotel door!

On subsequent trips to the continent Gipsy Hawkins visited Holland, Belgium, Switzerland

and Sweden. His aim in all these tours has been the salvation of souls, through Bible distribution and the preaching of the Gospel. No one will ever know what has been accomplished through his earnest, self-denying labours.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EASTERN TOUR

ON 21st November, 1912, Gipsy Hawkins and Rev. D. M. Cameron embarked upon an extensive Eastern tour which was to embrace Egypt, Palestine, Ceylon and India, and was to last six months. They sailed on the *City of Benares* with a first class pass to cover the entire itinerary.

The hand of God was seen very definitely in the arranging of this tour. While Gipsy Hawkins was fulfilling some engagements in Canada, he had a visit from Dr. Brown, Foreign Missions Secretary to the Canadian Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. Dr. Brown said, "It has been laid upon my heart to suggest that you should go to India."

The Gipsy was astounded. Two difficulties immediately came to his mind, language and finance. Dr. Brown explained that he could speak to the natives through an interpreter, and that a great work was to be done among young

Europeans resident in India. As to finance, the Gipsy could take up thank-offerings in the various churches he visited. No more was said.

When Gipsy Hawkins got back to England he called on Rev. D. M. Cameron. He had not been two hours in his study when Cameron said, "John, it is laid on my heart that you and I should go to India." The Gipsy told of the conversation with Dr. Brown and Cameron saw the hand of God in this. It confirmed him in his project. He had been afraid that the desire to go to India was just wander-lust. Now he knew it to be the will of God.

They were led to approach the Secretary of the Overseas Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association who was overjoyed to hear of their decision. He had been praying for some months that God would send him two men adapted for evangelistic work in India. Verily, prayer changes things.

It was decided that Gipsy Hawkins and Rev. D. M. Cameron should make the tour under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Overseas secretary arranged for a series of missions covering all the important towns and cities in the area to be visited. The

tour was undertaken in faith. It was not to be financed by the Young Men's Christian Association. All the expenses were met by thank-offerings taken up at the places where the missions were held. In the providence of God, hundreds of souls were won for Christ as a result of this tour.

Egypt was visited on the outward journey. The travellers spent some time in and around Cairo. The 5th Suffolk Regiment were then stationed at the Citadel in Cairo, and the evangelists had the joy of winning some of the soldiers there for Christ. During the Great War the Gipsy met some of these converts at Ripon and they were still serving the Master.

Like all visitors to Egypt, Gipsy Hawkins and his colleague were deeply impressed by the Pyramids of Gizeh. Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells us that the building of them required the services of one hundred thousand men for twenty years. These immense monuments were in existence before the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and testify to the early belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Because they held such beliefs the early Egyptians were in the habit of embalming the bodies of their dead.

From Egypt, Gipsy Hawkins and Mr. Cameron went on to Ceylon, landing at Colombo. Here they had a most successful campaign. All the churches united, and the attendances were large and enthusiastic. The whole district was stirred and many men from the schools and colleges were won for Christ. The Postmaster and many of his employees came out for God, and a special meeting was actually held in the Post Office premises. So great was the blessing that the local committee pleaded with the evangelists to remain longer than the scheduled time. This was impossible, but the Gipsy did stay on for a few days while his colleague went on to Madras, their next centre.

In Ceylon they visited many of the tea gardens and distributed hundreds of copies of the scriptures to the girls working there. Here and in India they were saddened by the sight of the awful degradation of women. In the East, women are just serfs and chattels. They do all the hard work, and must wait hand and foot upon the men. Women in more enlightened lands should thank God for the emancipating power of the Gospel. The Gipsy found much heathenism and idolatry in Ceylon. The sacred bull and other idols are revered. There are gipsies in

Ceylon, who are fierce and untameable. Many scholars believe that India, and not Egypt, is the original home of these people.

The evangelists had a time of much blessing in Calcutta. A huge tent, seating nearly three thousand, was erected at the Maidan, a great park with a race-course, cricket ground and beautiful gardens. There large crowds flocked to hear the message. Three campaigns were held in important churches : St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church in Lower Circular Road, and the Methodist Episcopal Church. St. Andrew's Church is a magnificent building of pure white marble. The Gipsy could not refrain from saying to the minister, "Your church is too grand for poor sinners to enter." "On the contrary," was the reply, "they are here in dozens." Many decisions were recorded at the very first meeting there.

An amusing incident occurred at the Baptist Church. The Gipsy was asked to speak to a company of native Biblewomen. They squatted on the floor, in the usual Indian fashion. Something detained the lady interpreter. Not knowing their language, Gipsy Hawkins smiled and, pointing to his heart, said, "Jesus." The Biblewomen beamed, pointed to their own hearts

and repeated, "Jesus." Then the Gipsy waved his handkerchief in the air and shouted, "Hallelujah." The Biblewomen raised their hands and cried, "Hallelujah." So they enjoyed sweet fellowship around these two words.

Benares is the Holy City of the Hindus. Tens of thousands of people come annually to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges and to be thus cleansed from sin. The evangelists, stirred with a deep longing to lead these precious souls out of the darkness of superstition and ignorance into the marvellous light of God's love, held a meeting there and told their audience of the blood of Jesus Christ which alone can wash away human guilt.

There is not space to tell the full story of the tour. Gipsy Hawkins and his friend visited Allahabad, Delhi, Amritsar, Peshawar, Lahore, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Agra, and other centres. At the last-named place is the renowned Taj Mahal, the most beautiful mausoleum on earth. It is built of pure white art marble and adorned with exquisite mosaics. It was built by the emperor Shah Jehan, as a tomb for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

Everywhere God blessed the ministry of His servants. The final campaigns in India were

held in Bombay, one at the Bishop Taylor Memorial Church and another at the Y.M.C.A.

On the homeward journey they visited Palestine and the Gipsy's long-cherished desire to see the Holy Land was realised. On arriving at Jerusalem he could not refrain from shedding tears of joy at being so privileged. Along with Rev. D. M. Cameron he visited the sites traditionally associated with Jesus' life and death,—the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mosque of Omar, built on the site of the Temple, and other places.

In the Garden of Gethsemane he sat under the oldest olive tree and read all the scriptures which relate to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Dean Stanley suggests that this tree existed in the time of Christ and may be the very tree under which "He sweat as it were great drops of blood."

At one of the meetings in the Y.M.C.A. at Jerusalem a Jewish lad of sixteen years of age professed Christ. He went home and told his father. The father spat on him three times, called him a "dirty Christian dog" and literally kicked him out of the house. Special prayer was made for the father, and by and by God softened his heart and he reinstated his son.

It costs a Jew a great deal to become a Christian.

Gipsy Hawkins paid a visit to Jacob's Well, the place where Jesus had sat and conversed with the woman of Samaria. In order to ensure that he should sit on the very spot where Jesus had sat the Gipsy seated himself all round the well.

In due course Gipsy Hawkins arrived back in England. The Far Eastern tour had been worth while. Hundreds of souls had been won for Christ. Prayer had been answered.

Within a year Rev. D. M. Cameron was dead. The Union Tabernacle, Wandsworth Road, was crowded at the funeral service on 16th April, 1914. Several evangelical leaders, including Dr. Eugene Cronin, and Rev. John Wilson of Woolwich, took part in the service. At the graveside Gipsy Hawkins bore testimony to the zeal and devotion of Mr. Cameron, displayed so conspicuously on the long evangelistic tours they had undertaken together. The Memorial notice which appeared in *The Christian* was written by John Hawkins.

Rev. D. M. Cameron was a remarkable personality. He was brought to Christ in early life and had preached the Gospel for over fifty

years. He was a personal friend of D. L. Moody and a frequent speaker at the Northfield Conference in America. In addition to his tours with Gipsy Hawkins he had visited Spain, Norway and Sweden in the interests of the Gospel. His record is on high.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAR YEARS

GIPSY HAWKINS was in Paris when war broke out. For the next four or five days he was practically a prisoner in the French capital as no one could leave the city. The French army was being mobilised and all trains were needed for the transport of troops. There was great excitement, and numerous patriotic processions paraded the streets. The Gipsy recollects being hugged by two charming Parisiennes in an excess of patriotic fervour! Everyone believed that the British navy, in combination with the French army would gain a speedy victory for the Allies.

On his return from Paris the Gipsy fulfilled a number of engagements in the homeland. Then for a period of eighteen months he was acting pastor of the large mission church, Wheat-sheaf Hall, in South Lambeth Road, London, not far from his old Railway Mission Hall. Wheat-sheaf Hall was founded by Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., a wealthy Christian gentleman. Mrs.

Caine was a daughter of Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown of Liverpool, the well-known Baptist preacher. Both she and her husband took a great interest in Gipsy Hawkins.

The minister in charge of Wheatsheaf Hall, Rev. T. Edwin Grout, was called to the colours when war broke out. Gipsy Hawkins took his place while he was away. He threw himself into the work with characteristic energy, conducting the services and visiting the homes of the people. The Caines brought Members of Parliament, and even Cabinet Ministers, to some of the meetings. Much blessing was experienced.

A newspaper cutting tells of a very successful Sale of Work in connection with Wheatsheaf Hall, on 16th December, 1915. Mrs. Lloyd George, wife of the Right Honourable D. Lloyd George, who was then Minister of Munitions, performed the opening ceremony and commended the work at the Hall in a very gracious speech. At tea afterwards she said to the Gipsy, "My husband was having a talk with me the other day and he remarked that the nations' greatest need, at the present time, was an old-fashioned revival of religion. If that were to come it would settle far more questions than the religious question."

Many other notable people were present at the Sale, including Sir Herbert Roberts, who moved a vote of thanks to Mrs. Lloyd George for performing the opening ceremony. Mr. John Hawkins, as acting pastor, also took part in the proceedings.

During the Great War Gipsy Hawkins was too old for active service in the Army. But he had a great desire to be of some use to his country and to the brave men who were fighting on her behalf. Accordingly, when he was released from duty at Wheatsheaf Hall, he joined the Open-Air Mission and was put in charge of one of their Soldiers' Welcome huts. These huts were located in most of the big camps. The Gipsy served first at Felixstowe, then at Ripon, and finally at Catterick in Yorkshire. The last-named was the largest army camp in Britain.

In this work the Gipsy was assisted by Mrs. Hawkins and a staff of helpers. During the day, refreshments such as tea, coffee, bovril, lemonade, with biscuits or sandwiches, were served to the men. Evangelistic meetings were held in the evenings, at which many a soldier yielded to the claims of Christ. Often the little place used as an enquiry room was filled with big fellows in khaki down on their knees seeking God.

Many striking incidents could be related concerning this period. One soldier, after his conversion, was greatly persecuted by a godless sergeant who threw his boots at the young convert as he knelt in prayer. Nothing daunted, the young convert got up early next morning and carefully cleaned the sergeant's boots! Next night the same thing happened. This went on for several nights until the sergeant, now under deep conviction of sin, came to Gipsy Hawkins' meeting and was soundly converted.

Another convert was very fond of hymn number 590 in Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos. Whenever a favourite hymn was asked for, he invariably shouted out, "Five hundred and ninety." Then he would join in singing with his fine deep voice :

"Life's morn will soon be waning
And its ev'ning bells be tolled ;
But my heart will know no sadness
When the pearly gates unfold."

The soldier's love for this hymn caused him to be nicknamed, "Five hundred and ninety." In due course "Five hundred and ninety" was sent to France and Gipsy Hawkins lost

all trace of him. Some years afterwards, the Gipsy was conducting a mission at St. James' Church, Glasgow. One night a man came to see him and said, "Do you know who I am?" "No," replied Gipsy Hawkins. "I am 'Five hundred and ninety'!" was the answer. Needless to say, they sang this hymn in the meeting that night and Gipsy Hawkins told the story connected with it.

At Felixstowe, a sentry's challenge resulted in the conversion of a sergeant. The fort there was jealously guarded. One day the Gipsy had been out for a walk and entered the fort by a different route. He was halted by a strange sentry, who did not know him. Not having a pass, he was placed in the guard-room and the sergeant was summoned. The Gipsy's credentials were examined and found all right, so he was allowed to proceed. Before doing so he had a word with the sergeant.

"Have you got a pass for heaven, Sergeant?" said Gipsy Hawkins.

"I am afraid not," was the reply.

"Then you'd better get one at once," said the Gipsy. "For, if they are half as particular *there* as you are here, you don't stand the ghost of a chance of getting in!"

The sergeant smiled, but the Gipsy's words had pierced a joint in his harness. Four days later he accepted Christ as his Saviour. Rising from his knees, he gripped the Gipsy's hand and said, "Thank God, I've got my pass for heaven now. That was the only thing that was troubling me. If death should come to me in the trenches, it won't be death but life everlasting."

CHAPTER X

CANADIAN EXPERIENCES

GIPSY HAWKINS is a well-known figure in Canada. Between 1909 and 1927 he spent some twelve years in that great country. There is a mass of material concerning his work there, including Mrs. Hawkins' diary, press and church reports, and a special day-to-day account of a three years' tour (1920-1923). It is only possible here to give an outline of his activities, with a brief account of some typical campaigns and outstanding events.

The Gipsy first visited Canada at the invitation of his life-long friend Mr. J. W. C. Fegan. A few words of explanation regarding Mr. Fegan's work are necessary here. Mr. Fegan was the founder and governor of the Boys' Home, then situated at 91-95 Southwark Street, London, S.E., where destitute boys were admitted at any time on the ground of absolute need. In due course they were passed on to the Training Home at Stony Stratford, Buckingham-

shire, where they received an all-round training in farm work. They were then sent over to Canada and placed in selected situations with farmers all over Ontario. There was a steady demand for such lads over a period of many years, and Mr. Fegan was able to give thousands of lads a good start in life.

Every year Mr. Fegan took a fresh contingent of trained lads to Canada. In 1909 the contingent was unusually large, numbering one hundred and twelve, and Mr. Fegan suggested to Gipsy Hawkins that he might accompany the party, lend a hand with the boys and, at the same time, enjoy the long sea-voyage. Accordingly, on Good Friday, 9th April 1909, they embarked on the *Empress of Britain*. The voyage was a memorable experience for Gipsy Hawkins. Steerage passengers—mostly emigrants—numbered one thousand; and Mr. Fegan and the Gipsy, assisted by their band of "boys," held three meetings a day for their benefit. The boys were trained to sing well. As soon as the singing started, crowds of passengers gathered round, listened to the short addresses, and were not slow in asking that their favourite hymns be sung. This was a valuable counter-attraction to the card-playing and dancing which are so common on

long voyages. A real work of grace was done in many hearts ; scores of temperance pledges were signed and many accepted Christ as Saviour.

By a fortunate coincidence, Professor James Denney, D.D., of the United Free Church College, Glasgow, the celebrated Scottish theologian, was on the same ship. He and the Fegans, with Gipsy Hawkins, had meals together in a small room during the eight days of the voyage. The Professor was on his way to Vancouver to deliver a series of lectures to the students there. Needless to say, the Gipsy enjoyed many a discussion with Dr. Denney. At the last meeting with the steerage passengers, the Doctor was asked if he would care to say a few words. "No, thank you," he replied, "it is not quite my constituency." When he tells this story the Gipsy is fond of adding that if he had been asked to address the theological students at Vancouver he would have said, "No thank you, it is not quite my constituency !" There is a place for all in God's scheme of things.

In due course the party arrived at Mr. Fegan's Distributing Home at 295 George Street, Toronto, Ontario ; and within a few days all the boys were comfortably settled in their new homes on various farms all over the province. Many of

these lads had yielded to Jesus Christ during the voyage.

Almost invariably Mr. Fegan's boys made good in Canada, and large numbers of them in after years kept in touch with the "Governor" as Mr. Fegan was affectionately called. On 27th April, 1909, Mr. Fegan celebrated his fifty-seventh birthday. A great many old boys got time off and travelled long distances to be present that day. The hours were spent in happy fellowship. During the preceding twelve months no less than one hundred and eighty of these lads had each subscribed ten pounds, the cost of his own emigration, to help to bring out other boys. Each of these boys received a medal and a certificate. The Gipsy was privileged to take part in the day's proceedings.

News of Gipsy Hawkins' visit to Canada had preceded him and, on arrival, he was asked to conduct a mission in Park Road Baptist Church, Toronto. Other churches heard of his work there and he received many invitations to visit various centres in Toronto and neighbourhood. He had a very successful campaign in the well-known Yonge Street Mission, Toronto. He also had missions in a number of important churches, including McPhail Memorial Church,

Ottawa; Century Baptist Church, Toronto; Park Street Church, Peterborough, and Fenelon Falls Church.

After some months the Gipsy had to return to England to fulfil engagements there. But in December, 1909, he returned to Canada for a second period of service, bringing Mrs. Hawkins with him. They sailed on 17th December, in the *Corsican*, and after fruitful campaigns in many places they returned to England in October 1910.

From now onwards till 1927, with the exception of the war years, Gipsy Hawkins visited Canada repeatedly in the interests of the Gospel. In all he paid ten visits to the Dominion, thus crossing the Atlantic twenty times. This fact, together with his visits to the Continent and his long tour in the East, reveals the globe-trotting propensities of our hero. Like a true gipsy, he has a passion for roaming. But thousands of souls in Canada have reason to thank God for Gipsy Hawkins.

His third visit to Canada extended from December 1910 to June 1912, and during the next two years Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins returned to Canada on several short visits. His longest sojourn in Canada, the 'Three Years' Tour, was made in the company of Mrs. Hawkins and Miss

Winifred Gould, who acted as his secretary and as Gospel soloist. They sailed in the *Canada* on 9th September, 1920, and did not return till 7th July, 1923. Fuller details of this trip will be given later. Another visit was made in 1925-26. During this visit Mrs. Hawkins had a severe breakdown in health and had to return home with Miss Gould. In 1927 the Gipsy paid his final visit to Canada, this time alone, to fulfil some engagements into which he had previously entered.

It is quite impossible to give here a detailed account of the many campaigns carried out in Canada by the Gipsy. In the space at our disposal we can indicate only some of the more interesting events and give some typical cases of conversion.

In Montreal a girl attended one of the Gipsy's Sunday services and went away deeply convicted. Next day, while at work in a knitting factory, she overbalanced and fell amongst the machinery. In such circumstances many had lost an arm or a leg but, to everyone's astonishment, the girl was picked up unhurt. She was taken home in a taxi and she told her mother of her mishap. "Mother," she said, "as I lay among the machinery my entire life passed before me in a flash like a series of living pictures and I knew

your prayers would avail for me." The mother answered, "Nellie, before you were born I gave you to God. Every day since your birth I have prayed for your conversion and that God would spare you until you had accepted Christ." That very night Nellie went to Gipsy Hawkins' meeting and was converted to God.

McPhail Memorial Church in Ottawa was packed night after night for twelve days. Scores who were not in the habit of attending church were present, and there were many remarkable cases of conversion. The *Ottawa Evening Citizen* reported, "Hundreds who went to the McPhail Church last evening to hear Gipsy Hawkins were turned away as the church was already crowded to the door." On the last night the Gipsy, as his custom was, told his life story. Although a severe blizzard was raging, the church was packed and scores stood in the aisles and doorways.

Here is one of the remarkable cases of decision for Christ at Yonge Street Mission, Toronto. A well-dressed gentleman came in one Saturday evening, under the influence of drink. He was persuaded to wait till he was sober and the workers took him home at half past one in the morning. He came back on Sunday evening

and waited for the after-meeting. One keen worker spoke to him. The man asked, "Can God save a drunkard and a gambler?"

"Yes," was the reply; "I was both, and He saved me."

The man went on, "I am under promise to play a man to-night for \$500 and a piano. If I fail to keep my appointment I shall lose my wager."

The worker answered, "The night I was converted I was under promise to play a man for £25 and a bicycle. I lost my wager but I found Christ. That was the best day's work I ever did."

"That settles it," said the man; "Christ for me." And he knelt down and gave his heart to Christ.

The following Saturday at a meeting for praise and testimony the new convert told his story as follows, "I was born to wealth and luxury. My mother was a proud society woman. At the age of seventeen I attended a great missionary meeting and was deeply stirred. I went home and said, 'Mother, I am going to be converted and then go as a missionary to India.' Mother's eyes flashed and she said, 'Horace, I would rather see you in hell.' This destroyed all my

good intentions made at the meeting and from that day onwards I went from bad to worse. Last Saturday I was as near to hell as any man could possibly be. Now, by the grace of God, I am saved and on my way to heaven."

A special feature of the work at Yonge Street Mission, Toronto, was the huge open-air meetings in Riverdale Park, a popular resort of the people of the city. As many as fifteen hundred people gathered to hear the Gipsy deliver his message, and it was an impressive sight to see many well-dressed men and women publicly raise their hands in token of their decision for Christ.

The Gipsy had an interesting mission at Port Hope, a pretty watering place on the Bay of Quinte. It was here that Joseph Scriven lived and wrote that grand old hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus." Sankey says of this hymn, "Wherever it is sung it is a greater favourite than any other. Criminals on the scaffold have again and again asked for it to be sung. It has gone right round the world. It has been sung in the sweet Italian tongue under the very walls of the Vatican itself."

There is a monument to Mr. Scriven's memory near Port Hope. It bears the inscription :

“Here lies the philanthropist, Joseph Scriven, B.A., writer of the well-known hymn, ‘What a friend we have in Jesus,’ written at Port Hope in 1857.

Born at Seapatrick, County Down, Ireland.

Received Degree at Trinity College.

Came to Canada in 1844.”

Then follows the hymn itself in full.

The Gipsy heard many stories of Mr. Scriven’s benevolence. He would divest himself of his own clothing to help one in need. He was for many years connected with the “Brethren.” The breath of revival came to Port Hope during the Gipsy’s visit and exactly one hundred souls passed through the enquiry room and professed faith in Christ.

Once the Gipsy went to a place off the beaten track to conduct a mission among the farmers of Canada’s wide open spaces. To reach the place he had a twenty-miles ride in a two-horse sleigh. When he arrived, the wife of the farmer who acted as his host, killed and roasted a sucking pig. He was very hungry and enjoyed to the full the delicious supper of roast pig. Next day he had roast pig for breakfast, followed by roast pig for dinner and again roast pig for supper. At meals the following day the menu was the

same and roast pig was still quite palatable. The day after, roast pig was again served up at each of their three principal meals and it did not taste quite so delicious. To cut a long story short, they were at this place for fourteen days and for fourteen days in succession they had roast pig for breakfast, roast pig for dinner and roast pig for supper. As the Gipsy says, in telling this story, "I was really ashamed to look a decent pig in the face for months afterwards!" In spite of this the Gipsy has the highest admiration for these farmers, many of whom are Christians of the finest type.

During his second visit to Canada Gipsy Hawkins spent four months as pastor of a little Baptist church at Rossland, B.C. The church had been closed for some time and the Gipsy was to re-start the services. There were many gold-miners in the district, who had no interest in religion. When Gipsy Hawkins arrived, the Presbyterian and Anglican ministers took him to be introduced to a Mr. Spencer, the editor of the local newspaper. The editor immediately recognized him as the preacher at an evangelistic campaign in Wolverhampton, England, some thirteen years before. He greeted the Gipsy most cordially, to the amazement of the local

ministers. This sort of thing has happened repeatedly, in all parts of the world, during Gipsy Hawkins' evangelistic career. It has been a constant delight to him to meet with splendid Christian workers in all sorts of places, who owe their conversion, under God, to him.

At Rossland he had the unique privilege of leading a soul to Christ at the bottom of a gold-mine! One of the officials of the Le Roi gold mine invited the Gipsy to inspect it. They got into a cage and had a sudden drop of two thousand feet. Then they got into an electric car and drove for nearly two miles in the bowels of the earth. After inspecting the workings, the official took Gipsy Hawkins to the scene of a recent accident. Here they had a long talk and the man opened his heart to the Gipsy. God had been speaking to him very definitely at the services. He admitted that he was not a converted man and said, "When you give the invitation to-night, I'll be the first to come out for God."

The Gipsy answered, "Why wait till to-night? God is no respecter of persons or of places. Why not settle the matter now?"

They knelt down together beside a little heap of debris—the result of the accident—and

there, in the depths of a gold-mine two thousand feet underground, that mine official accepted Christ as Saviour. Rising from his knees he said, "Gipsy, I have found many a rich nugget of gold in this mine, but now I have experienced the greatest find of all. I have found Jesus Christ as my Saviour." Happy is the man who finds Christ. He is rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

The Gipsy had many campaigns in the Maritime Provinces. One of these was in the busy commercial city of Moncton, where the Gipsy had a great mission in Highfield Street Baptist Church. A new building had just been opened there. It was a large and beautiful edifice costing one hundred thousand dollars, and it was situated right in the heart of the city. This spacious auditorium was filled each night and over one hundred and twenty souls were won for Christ.

In the course of the Gipsy's three years' tour in Canada, the Baptist churches of Ontario and Quebec planned a great Forward Movement. Missions were to be held in as many churches as possible and church members were to try to win one soul each for Christ during the year of the campaign. Gipsy Hawkins was engaged

as one of the evangelists for this movement and agreed to serve for one year, from 1st January, 1921. His itinerary was arranged by Rev. C. H. Schutt, D.D., Superintendent of the Home Mission Board. During the first six months the Gipsy visited many centres and had several fruitful campaigns.

By the month of July, 1921, Gipsy Hawkins was feeling overstrained and physically exhausted. He had a complete rest for several weeks but, towards the end of his holiday, he contracted a severe internal chill, probably through bathing when he was run down and exhausted. His temperature rose alarmingly and he was taken to hospital for treatment. This was to take some time and, if it failed, he would have to undergo a serious operation. Accordingly he resigned his position as evangelist for the Baptist Home Board.

This, the one really serious illness of his life, was a new and strange experience for the Gipsy. He had never had an illness, and never once disappointed an audience through indisposition over a period of thirty-five years. The experience was a "valley of Baca" to him, but he learned many precious lessons there. After some weeks of pain, the operation took place at Wellesley

Hospital, Toronto, on 31st October, 1921. It was entirely successful and thus many heartfelt prayers were answered. Through the kindness of Rev. J. G. Butland, the pastor of Zion Chapel, he spent the weeks of convalescence in a very comfortable home in Toronto.

Hospital expenses and other fees were somewhat heavy, amounting to sixteen hundred dollars, and soon the Gipsy's savings were exhausted. There was one bill still to be paid. The Gipsy had been telling people for years about the power of prayer. Now was the time to put the matter to the test. Definite prayer was made and within four days an answer came from the other side of the Atlantic! Mr. Fegan's manager in Toronto received a cablegram ordering him to give Gipsy Hawkins two hundred and fifty dollars. Another two hundred and fifty dollars arrived soon after. Thus prayer was answered and the outstanding bill was paid. "Before they call I will answer." This is only one of innumerable cases of answered prayer in connection with the Gipsy's work.

After seven months of inaction and enforced silence, the Gipsy resumed the work of evangelism on 19th February, 1922, when he began a very encouraging mission in College Street Baptist

Church, Toronto. The building seats fifteen hundred. Attendances were good, and quite a number made decision for Christ, including a stalwart policeman who had long been the subject of earnest prayer.

About this time, the Gipsy was offered the pastorate of no less than four different churches. He has received such offers many times in his career, but he has always declined them as his heart is in aggressive evangelistic work. It is perhaps in the best interests of God's Kingdom that he should remain an evangelist. Faithful pastors are numerous ; outstanding evangelists are few.

Gipsy Hawkins has a very warm corner in his heart for Canada. He has always been well-received there and has found a ready ear for the Gospel message. He has preached to congregations of every type and no mission has been barren of result. The Red Indians have heard his message and responded to it. Farmers on the rolling prairies have welcomed him. He has preached to the sturdy lumbermen of Ottawa. The finest churches in the land have received him gladly. He has preached in the famous Jarvis Street Church at Toronto, where Dr. T. T. Shields, the "Canadian Spurgeon," ministers to a huge

congregation. He has taken services in the aristocratic Walmer Road Church, in the same city, of which the scholarly Dr. John McNeill was minister. Surely these are remarkable achievements for one who, as a boy, used to sell newspapers and black shoes on the streets of London. Gipsy Hawkins would be the first to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

In addition to his many missions in Canada, the Gipsy has carried on some very successful campaigns in the United States of America. Unfortunately, no record of these campaigns has been preserved.

CHAPTER XI

THE EVANGELIZATION SOCIETY

THE Evangelization Society was founded by a number of earnest, public-spirited laymen in 1864. It exists "to provide experienced evangelists for the purpose of conducting special missions in any part of Great Britain." For some years the head office was in Memorial Hall Buildings, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. It is now in Dawson House, Tufton Street, Westminster, S.W.1., and the present secretary (1939) is Lieutenant-Colonel D. C. D. Munro, D.S.O., M.C. There are branch offices in Glasgow and Liverpool.

For seventy-five years this Society has done a most valuable work all over the British Isles. In the summer, tent missions are conducted at many centres. All winter the evangelists are engaged in conducting campaigns in churches, mission halls and other buildings. The evangelists on the staff of the Society are all experienced men of proved ability, with a special gift for evangelistic work. Many outstanding men have

served in the work of the Society and many notable campaigns have been conducted.

Gipsy Hawkins' first connection with the Evangelization Society goes back to the year 1904, when the Railway Mission loaned him to the Society for a special mission at Walsall. After the Gipsy left the Railway Mission to become a freelance evangelist he conducted several other campaigns for the Society without actually joining the staff.

In 1927, after his final visit to Canada, the Gipsy was told by the doctors that his wife's health would prevent her from doing much travelling. The Gipsy, therefore, gave up the idea of making further trips to Canada and decided to settle down to work in this country. It was then that Mr. E. J. Mitchell, the highly respected secretary of the Evangelization Society, suggested that Gipsy Hawkins should become a member of their staff of evangelists, and work under their auspices. After earnest thought and prayer the Gipsy fell in with this suggestion and for the past twelve years he has worked for the Society. All his missions are arranged in consultation with its secretary.

Under the auspices of the Evangelization Society Gipsy Hawkins has conducted missions

in many of the largest churches and centres of Gospel-witness throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. His time has been fully taken up and he is usually booked up for months ahead. The blessing of God has continued to rest upon his labours and hundreds have been won for Christ during the past twelve years. In this work his unique and many-sided experience has proved an invaluable asset. So the veteran evangelist goes on his way and continues to reap in the Gospel field.

It is quite impossible to give a detailed account of all the missions held during this period. All we can do is to select typical instances of his work and give brief summaries of representative campaigns.

In 1927 the Gipsy had a particularly fruitful mission in connection with the City of Dublin Young Men's Christian Association. Crowds gathered in the huge hall. Captain Wallis estimated that two thousand were present on Sunday evenings and over one thousand at some of the week-night meetings. The enquiry room was in constant use and many found Christ as Saviour.

One notable case of conversion was that of a would-be suicide. This man had come from

Belfast in quest of employment, only to be disappointed. At the end of his resources and thoroughly disheartened, he was on his way to the river to drown himself. He saw a crowd entering the Y.M.C.A. building and joined them. As he listened to the Gipsy's earnest words hope returned, and the light of God entered his soul. He made his way to the enquiry room and accepted Christ as Saviour. The next day, through the good offices of Captain Wallis, he got work.

The Gipsy is fond of Tent Mission work and, during the summer, he is invariably engaged upon it somewhere. Here is a typical report. One year, along with Rev. Philip G. Smith, B.D., who also was on the staff of the Evangelization Society, Gipsy Hawkins had a Tent Mission at Exmouth. At first the numbers attending were small, but interest steadily grew until the large tent was filled to its utmost capacity. People of all denominations supported the effort and several "Marches of Witness" were organized with great success. During one week of the mission, a travelling fair with all its usual noise was pitched just behind the Gipsy's tent. Nothing daunted, the missionaries seized the opportunity and held late open-air

meetings, so that hundreds of people heard the Gospel message, especially after dark. During this mission, quite a number made decision for Christ and many believers were quickened spiritually.

Of course, like all evangelists, Gipsy Hawkins occasionally strikes a "hard patch" where attendances are meagre and the response is small. In some places there is quarrelling and bad feeling among the workers, and this spoils the best efforts of the evangelist. But, on the whole, he has hardly ever left a place without seeing some fruit.

During this stage of his work, among the many large mission halls visited were, Charrington's Great Assembly Hall and East London Tabernacle in London; St. George's Cross Tabernacle, (where Pastor D. J. Findlay laboured so successfully), the Tent Hall, (with its memories of D. L. Moody), Bethany Hall, Grove Street Institute and the Seamen's Bethel in Glasgow; and the famous Bank Hall Mission, Liverpool, where an audience of over one thousand gathers every Sunday evening.

Among the many important churches for which he conducted campaigns were, Merton Congregational Church and Hampstead Presby-

terian Church in London ; Emmanuel Church, Brighton ; Mountpottinger Baptist Tabernacle, Belfast ; The Tabernacle, Porth, Wales ; St. James' Church of Scotland, Glasgow ; Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne ; and Toxteth Tabernacle, Liverpool.

Another matter of personal and domestic importance should be mentioned here. Reference was made in an earlier chapter to Miss Jessie Gray, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gray of Carter Home. For many years she lived with Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins. They had no surviving family of their own and Jessie was like a daughter to them. After a short period of failing health, Jessie Gray passed away on 18th December, 1934. This was a very real grief to Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins. Miss Gray had been in membership at Trinity Road Chapel, Upper Tooting, London, S.W., for some twenty-four years. Early in life she accepted Christ and she lived a most useful and devoted Christian life. She served as a Sunday School teacher, a worker in the Christian Endeavour, and in various other capacities. Rev. Henry Oakley, writing in the church monthly magazine, emphasized kindness as the outstanding trait in her character. " She thought kindness, she devised kindness, she

performed kindness. It can truly be said of her that she *was* kindness personified." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, they rest from their labours and their works do follow them."

It may here be said that Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins are honoured members of the church at Trinity Road Chapel, Upper Tooting, and have been associated with this church for some years. It is conveniently near to their home in Rowfant Road, Balham, and they enjoy the fine expository preaching and earnest ministry of the pastor, Rev. Henry Oakley.

CHAPTER XII

THE MAN HIMSELF

THIS biographical sketch would not be complete without some account of the man himself, as distinct from the work he has done. The previous chapters tell a great tale of splendid and fruitful service, rendered in all parts of the world. Behind all such work lies a complex human personality. What we are gives value to what we do. It is now our purpose to examine the man behind the work and discover, if we can, the sources of his power and the secrets of his success.

Character is an elusive thing and almost defies definition. Mr. J. W. C. Fegan was a shrewd judge of boys and men. He heard Gipsy Hawkins, as a boy of thirteen, at a conference at Greenwich and was greatly impressed by him even then. He wrote, "I saw character and determination stamped on every utterance and gesture of the young witness." All who have met Gipsy Hawkins are impressed with his force of character.

He is a man of distinctive personality, forceful, earnest and persuasive, and all his gifts of character are utilized in the service of the Kingdom.

The Gipsy has learned much in the school of life. He has the instinctive courtesy of a Christian gentleman, and the culture that comes through travel and contact with men. These things, along with diligent study of the Word of God and other books, have more than made up for the early lack of educational facilities.

There is a depth of sincerity and real devotion about the Gipsy which is very attractive in these days of lukewarmness. Here is a man of blazing enthusiasm, with a genuine love for Christ and an earnest desire to win the souls of men. The Gipsy hates cant and humbug as he hates the devil. "God desires truth in the inward parts." Gipsy Hawkins' own spiritual life is a very real thing. He is a man of childlike faith and earnest prayer. He is a thorough-going altruist. His sole aim is the glory of God and the salvation of men; monetary reward has never been primary with him. Some have feathered their own nests while serving the Master. Gipsy Hawkins will end as he began, a poor man.

Withal the Gipsy is a humanist, greatly in-

terested in his fellow men. His mind runs in no narrow groove. His interests are wide as the world. It follows that he is able to understand people and to speak to them in a language that they understand.

What are his doctrinal beliefs? It is well that we should discover the underlying principles inherent in his presentation of the Gospel. What are the truths which have produced such amazing results and changed so many lives? The Gipsy would probably describe himself as a "Fundamentalist" though he is averse to such labels. He accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God in the strictest interpretation of that term. His has been essentially a Bible ministry and his whole career has been marked by absolute fidelity to the scriptures. He lays great stress on the deity of Christ and His atoning work. To him these facts are of supreme importance. They are kept in the forefront of all his preaching. With the Gipsy, as with all great evangelists, the Cross is central and dynamic. The results that follow are not accidental; they are the natural outcome of a sane, earnest presentation of "Christ crucified." As He is lifted up men are drawn to Him. The Gipsy is uncompromisingly loyal to Christ.

Gipsy Hawkins is a Calvinist of the Spurgeonian type. He believes in the electing grace of God but also in man's free will. Hence he has always preached a full, free and immediate salvation to all who are prepared to accept Christ as Saviour.

He accepts the idea of a pre-millennial coming of Christ, but he is not for ever harping on this string. Nevertheless it has a real place in his ministry. He believes that there can be no Kingdom until the King has come. Christ must come in person ere the Kingdom is set up.

The essential unity of all believers is a doctrine strongly held by Gipsy Hawkins. He is the reverse of being narrow or bigoted. Throughout his life he has rendered service to all branches of the Christian Church. He has led missions for the Church of England, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. He has preached in "Brethren" meetings, Salvation Army halls and in every type of mission hall. The Gipsy is never happier than when he is conducting a United Campaign in which all denominations co-operate. Then, in some measure, the ideal is realised, "All one in Christ Jesus."

A few words regarding the Gipsy's methods may not be inappropriate. It must be said right

away that Gipsy Hawkins relies absolutely upon the Holy Spirit and seeks to do all his work in the power of that Spirit. This is the open secret of his success and the ultimate source of all spiritual power. "Every virtue we possess, and every victory won . . . are His alone."

The downright earnestness of the man rivets the attention of his audience and carries conviction. It is a truism that such earnestness is contagious. The most lackadaisical congregation is roused when the preacher is obviously in deadly earnest. This is true of Gipsy Hawkins' preaching.

Further, he is master of a simple, fluent, Anglo-Saxon phraseology. His preaching is concrete rather than abstract, and abounds in telling illustrations, grave and gay, culled mostly from his own wide experience. There is a delightful quality of freshness about his messages which captivates the hearer. Gipsy Hawkins succeeds in putting himself, his own winsome personality, into his addresses. There is also discernible that note of authority so sadly lacking in many preachers to-day. A timid, apologetic tone does not commend the Gospel or command respect. The Gipsy, as an ambassador for Christ, speaks "as one having authority."

There is no cheap sensationalism about the Gipsy or his messages. He makes no attempt to play upon the emotions of his hearers. The Gipsy speaks in a sane, straightforward manner, and relies upon a reasoned address to attain his object, not upon hysterical appeals. His methods of appeal and enquiry room work are above reproach. There is no attempt at coercion. But the challenge to immediate decision for Christ is quietly and earnestly pressed home.

Some more personal and intimate details may here be given as to the Gipsy's character. Every man has a hero. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, prince of preachers, is Gipsy Hawkins' hero. In his early days the Gipsy contrived to hear Dr. Joseph Parker's noon addresses in the City Temple each Thursday, and Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's evening addresses at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the same day. He drank in every word they said. When Spurgeon died the Gipsy was one of the immense crowd who attended the funeral service. He secured a place very near to the grave in Norwood Cemetery and listened to the fervent prayer of Dr. A. T. Pierson and the wonderful eulogy by Rev. Archibald G. Brown. The whole scene is fresh and vivid in the Gipsy's mind to this day. The huge concourse

at the grave sang Spurgeon's favourite hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood." At the third verse, which Spurgeon was fond of quoting, the great crowd sobbed rather than sang the words,

"Ere since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme
And shall be till I die."

When the great Tabernacle was burned down Gipsy Hawkins stood and watched with tears in his eyes. One of the Gipsy's greatest treasures is a couple of singed leaves from the pulpit Bible actually used by C. H. Spurgeon.

A very characteristic trait in the Gipsy's character is his love for books, especially theological books. In the early years of their married life, his wife would often deny herself a new hat or something else, in order that he might get some coveted new book. Gipsy Hawkins' well-stocked library at Balham contains all the standard theological works and is specially rich in Bible Commentaries.

The Gipsy's fondness for walking and other forms of physical exercise has already been

mentioned. All his life he has endeavoured to keep himself fit for his arduous work. He is amazingly virile for his age. Many a younger man would envy his agility!

For many years the Gipsy has had a turkish bath regularly every week. He is a connoisseur in such baths, having had them in most of the European countries as well as in Canada, United States and the Far East! Naturally the methods employed vary considerably in different countries, and the Gipsy has had many strange experiences in this connection. He could write a book on this subject! Many are the ministers and Christian workers who have been initiated into the mysteries of a turkish bath by the Gipsy in recent years.

SOME TRIBUTES

Leading ministers and laymen all over the world have spontaneously and gladly paid tribute to Gipsy Hawkins and his work. It would take a large volume to contain such appreciations. We can give only a few of these tributes from people who knew the Gipsy intimately.

His life-long and beloved friend Mr. J. W. C. Fegan writes as follows, "I do not know a more

helpful instance to set before young men of the possibilities of a life wholly surrendered to Christ than John Hawkins. He is a true and faithful servant of God; a man of faith and prayer with a single heart to glorify God and to win souls for Christ."

Dr. George H. Morrison, the well-known author, minister of Wellington Church, Glasgow, wrote, "I have known Mr. Hawkins for some years. He has an excellent grasp of Scriptural truths and a very uncommon power of presenting them in a forcible, homely and telling way."

Rev. John Wilson, D.D., of Woolwich Tabernacle, ex-President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, wrote, "Mr. John Hawkins is well-known to all the leaders of the Christian church in this country. He is in the front rank as an evangelist, and is loved, trusted and esteemed by us all."

Rev. E. J. Stobo, D.D., of Smith Falls, Canada, writes, "Brother Hawkins' preaching is strong and Scriptural and he keeps close to the Cross. His methods are sane and unobjectionable, and he has the power of winning and holding the people."

Rev. C. H. Schutt, D.D., of Century Baptist Church, Toronto, later Superintendent of the

Home Board of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, wrote of Gipsy Hawkins, "I look upon him as a man of prayer and consecration of spirit, and as an earnest, devoted and able evangelist. He is free from sensationalism and proclaims the truth in a clear and interesting manner. I consider him very thorough and safe in his methods. He is loyal to the pastor and church for whom he is working."

Rev. Benjamin Goodfield, B.A., of College Street Church, Toronto, writes, "Brother Hawkins could fill with distinction any pulpit in the land and he is a faithful preacher of 'old-time truths.' There is no doubt that, as a lecturer, he could command very considerable financial support in any English-speaking country."

If space permitted, dozens of additional tributes to the work and worth of Gipsy Hawkins could be given. All can be summed up in the Scriptural statement, he is "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." To know him is to respect and love him. His service for Christ is not at an end. Our fervent prayer is, "May his bow abide in strength!" May he be long spared to preach the Gospel of "free grace and dying love."

The years roll on. We know that for our friend and brother there will be "light at eventide." When the call comes, Gipsy John Hawkins will go to meet his Saviour with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him.

POSTSCRIPT

On Sunday, 3rd September, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. A few days later, in spite of the submarine menace, Gipsy Hawkins crossed over to Ulster for a series of evangelistic campaigns. As this book goes to the printer, the veteran evangelist is located at Newry, Northern Ireland. It is noteworthy that, despite the stringent "black-out" and war conditions, attendances have been exceptionally large and scores have made decision for Christ. The proclamation of the Gospel is more urgent and necessary than ever before, and Gipsy Hawkins hopes to continue his evangelistic work in war as in peace-time.

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